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Interview: C.J. CHERRYH

BEYOND GENOCIDE By **DAMON KNIGHT**



ONE IMMORTAL MAN

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Formerly THE ALIEN CRITIC

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ALIEN THOUGHTS BY THE EDITOR....4

BEYOND GENOCIDE BY DAMON KNIGHT.8

JOHNNY WIRECUTTER A POEM
BY NEAL WILGUS.....11

INTERVIEW WITH C.J. CHERRYH
CONDUCTED BY GALE BURNICK.....14

HE HEARS... NIGHTFALL BY ISAAC
ASIMOV.
REVIEWED BY MARK MANSELL.....18

THE HUMAN HOTLINE
SF NEWS BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT.....19

THE VIVISECTOR A COLUMN
BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER.....22

OTHER VOICES BOOK REVIEWS BY
ORSON SCOTT CARD, BILL GLASS,
PAUL MCGUIRE III, FRED PATTEN,
DAVID A. TRUESDALE, MARK MAN-
SELL, WILMA T. WRIGHT, NEAL
WILGUS, ELTON T. ELLIOTT, DEAN
R. LAMBE, ROY TACKETT, GRETCHEN
RIX.

SMALL PRESS NOTES
PY THE EDITOR.....35

MOVING VISIONS
SF, FANTASY AND HORROR FILM
NEWS BY BILL WARREN.....36

ONE IMMORTAL MAN CONCLUSION
A SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL
BY RICHARD E. GEIS.....45

THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT
BY RICHARD E. GEIS & ALTER.....63

REVIEWS

DR. STRANGE.....	7
NIGHTFALL (RECORD).....	18
IMMORTAL.....	28
LOCUS.....	23
COLD FEAR.....	25
TALES FROM GAVAGAN'S BAR.....	24
EXTRAPOLATION, AN SF NEWS - LETTER.....	24
BIG PLANET.....	24
LORD FOUL'S BANE.....	25
WHO GOES THERE?.....	25
PURSUIT OF THE SCREAMER.....	25
AN EXERCISE FOR MADMEN.....	26
EMPTY WORLD.....	26
BEASTS.....	27
THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES, SERIES VI.....	27
SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE.....	27
SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE.....	28
COLONY.....	28
THE ACTS OF KING ARTHUR AND HIS NOBLE KNIGHTS.....	29
THE CITY OF THE SUN.....	29
BLIND VOICES.....	30
STARSTONE.....	30
THE ORANGE R.....	30
MONUMENT.....	31
THE GOTHIC HORROR AND OTHER WEIRD TALES.....	31
SWORDS AGAINST DARKNESS III.....	32
KALKI.....	32
CYCLES OF WAR: THE NEXT SIX YEARS.....	33
THE ADAM EXPERIMENT.....	34
THE RAVENS OF THE MOON.....	34
SF & F 36.....	35
FANTASY CROSSROADS #14.....	35
SHAYOL #1-2.....	35

THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE.....	35
ANTHOLOGY OF SPECULATIVE POETRY #3.....	35
TABU SPANISH OF MEXICO.....	35
THE WHOLE FANZINE CATALOG #2.....	35
THRUST #11.....	35
DRACULA'S DOG.....	37
ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES.....	37
HALLMOON.....	38
LEONORA.....	38
PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK.....	38
THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL.....	38
WATERSHIP DOWN.....	39
CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST.....	63

INTERIOR ART

TIM KIRK—2, 4, 64
ALEXIS GILLILAND—5, 8, 10, 12,
19, 22, 28, 31, 32, 37

JIM SHULL—6, 25
VIC KOSTRIKIN—9, 35, 39
MIKE GILBERT—11, 13, 38, 40
JAMES MCQUADE—11
TODD KLEIN—12
ALLEN KOSZOWSKI—16
RANDY MOHR—18
RICHARD BRUNING—21, 33
ROBERT WHITAKER—23, 26
BILL ROTSLER—27
RUSTIN—30
RICK JANSEN—36
BRUCE CONKLIN—43, 45

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LETTERS-----

DARRELL SCHWEITZER.....	4, 42
JOHN SHIRLEY.....	5
ROBERT BLOCH.....	6
ARTHUR TOFFE.....	6
MICHAEL MOORCOCK.....	6
ORSON SCOTT CARD.....	7
JOHN MORRESSY.....	13
STEVE PERRY.....	41
JACK WILLIAMSON.....	41
CHARLES SHEFFIELD.....	41
RON GOULART.....	41
GIL LAMONT.....	41
DENNIS LIEN.....	42
JOHN STRICKLAND.....	42
HERITAGE PRESS REPORT ON AWARDS.....	42
FRED PATTEN.....	44
RICH BARTUCCI.....	44

10-13-78 Final entry. There seems to be a conflict between what new GALAXY editor Hank Stine told both Elton Elliott and myself about the new payments schedule, and that reported in the September LOCUS.

Hank told us payment for material would be within 72 hours of acceptance. The LOCUS story says '72 hours after publication.'

Since Charles Brown, editor and publisher of LOCUS talked to Hank after I did (not sure if he and Elton discussed the matter at Iguacon), the policy may have changed in that period. Given the financial problems of GALAXY's publisher this is entirely possible...even consistent.

Elton just called and is hot on the trail of finding out for sure about Playboy's plans for PULSAR.

He also called Charlie Brown about the GALAXY story and apparently Hank Stine (or Charlie) is not sure what the payments policy is. More on all this next issue.

We're having continuing problems with subscribers who very helpfully send in their new addresses...but neglect to mention their former zip-code.

WE HAVE TO HAVE YOUR FORMER ZIP-CODE when you move. That's the only way we can find your subscription card. We do NOT keep a separate alphabetical file on subscribers. Thank you.

Next Issue.....

WILL PROBABLY BE MADE UP FROM THE FOLLOWING:

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN BRUNNER

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL MOORCOCK

"LOVE THY PUBLISHER: THE ASIMOV METHOD" BY CHARLES PLATT

"OCCASIONALLY MENTIONING SCIENCE FICTION" BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

"SCIENCE FICTION ON FILM ON PAPER" BY WAYNE KEYSER

A NEW COLUMN ON SF MAGAZINE FICTION BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

PLUS SF FILMS BY BILL WARREN, SF NEWS BY ELTON ELLIOTT, OTHER VOICES, ALIEN THOUGHTS, CARTOONS....

IN THE #30 FILE: AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN R. DONALDSON

"THE EDGE OF FUTURIA" BY RAY NELSON

GEIS WANTS A ZIPPY CODA, I'LL GIVE HIM A ZIPPY CODA. I'LL JUST RIP OFF THE LAST TWO PAGES FROM "THE LOVE OF THREE FANZINES" I WROTE WHEN I WAS A CHILD PRODIGY.



WAS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO SCORE YOUR WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT FOR BRASS AND PERCUSSION, ADELMAN?



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ALIEN THOUGHTS



BY THE EDITOR

8-27-78 Things are popping. The GALAXY mess is on its way to being cleaned up, I think.

I received a phone call a few minutes ago, from Hank Stine. He informed me he is the new editor of GALAXY.

He will edit it from his home in Baton Rouge, La. His full address is:

Hank Stine
585 Caddo St.
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

Hank had good news for me and bad news. He is taking GALAXY in a different direction and my column, "The Alien Viewpoint," is no longer appropriate. [When I told this to Alter-Ego, he went into a hissy fit and started looking around for a new host. "Anybody but a lousy, double-crossing, no-good, two-bit writer" were his exact words. I feel a funny emptiness inside my head now...a kind of strange vacuum. I wonder.... could he be gone?]]

Actually, not doing that Alter-Ego-dominated column is a blessing in disguise. I was very, very tired of it. It had about run its natural course.

Hank has done me a favor. The 'good news' is that he wants me as book reviewer for GALAXY, and he wants a lot of short reviews, on the whole. That fits my disposition, so there is no conflict. I have chosen "The Alien Bookshelf" as title.

Other news about GALAXY: Hank is working something out with Joe Haldeman and SFWA about paying off the current GALAXY debts to writers and (I presume) artists.

The top word rate for GALAXY is now 1¢ per word. That is not a typo. One cent per word, tops. BUT--payment within 72 hours of acceptance. With the money saved and with money from hoped-for sales increases, the parent corporation hopes to pay off all the past-due accounts and gradually up the rates.

I was told GALAXY will be monthly beginning in January.

How Hank's editorial policy in re fiction will differ from that of Jim Baen or J.J. Pierce is not yet clear. Or where he expects to get enough decent fiction at 1¢ per word.

GALAXY, with the Sept. issue has already had a cover and logo change---new type style for the title and a full-cover painting with logo and minimal story-author listings overprinted. I like it.

8-28-78 Hank called again today. He wants to use two SFR columnists in GALAXY: Elton Elliott to contribute a short sf news and features column, and... Well, until I hear a confirmation of the second offer, and acceptance, I shouldn't mention the other columnist.

Norman Spinrad [I hear from Elton] has been asked to do a science column for GALAXY.

This comes to four columnists. And maybe there'll be a readers' column of letters. Maybe an editorial... Right! The less fiction the better!

Hank said he'd work up a written announcement giving more information on his fiction philosophy and needs.

Who is Hank Stine? I don't know. I met him a few times in Los Angeles in the 60s when we were both writing for Essex House and for editor Brian Kirby, and I know he's a damned good fiction writer. What he's been doing since then is unknown to me.

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER
July 1978

'About all I can say to Damon Knight over the "Tomus" matter is that if experienced SF readers find the story confusing, this does not

suggest that new readers will find it less so. And when one does understand the story and thinks back over it, there is nothing to be gained by the ambiguity, any more than there would have been anything gained by Melville's not letting on that Moby Dick is a whale until late in the book. It's necessary for a writer to say what he means, and in science fiction, for him to get his basic premise down clearly, and early. The story is built on this. Situations derive from it. If the premise isn't clear, neither will the subsequent situations be. Of course, this is all my word (and Delap's) against Knight, which looks pretty ridiculous... but, you have to consider that Knight has alienated virtually all his readers from ORBIT. There has not been a paperback since volume 13. Now the series has died on him. At the same time other anthology series have managed to survive. Clearly, Damon is doing something wrong. Remember how it was about six or seven years ago when ORBIT was a major series, and each new volume was an event attracting a lot of attention, and many award nominees and winners were first published therein? Nowadays it is (or was, since I believe there's only one more volume to go) very much a backwater.

'Richard Klump's (is this a pseudonym) article about the tactfully unnamed agency is interesting. I think I know which one he's talking about, and contrary to what he says, they're still soliciting manuscripts on a reading fee basis. I get junk mail from them periodically. The whole operation is summed up in what Mr. Klump says about virtually all the stories being at least "promising". The truth of the matter is that the majority of stories one receives are not promising. Which is why a reading fee operation is almost totally worthless. They must flatter you, no matter how hopeless you are, so they can get more \$\$ next time. I forget who said it, but I've heard the idea summed up as "If they say it's a spectacular masterpiece, it might be marginally saleable".

'By the way, I've never heard anything good about the agency in question from writers or editors. I've heard of the clients being referred to as BB's "victims", although of course, the desk man is more often responsible. Allegedly, they also get quite nasty if a writer tries to get away from them (i.e. tying up what works they control), thus leaving the writer trapped when someone else could do much more to advance his career. Of course, I don't know if any of this is true, but I hear things said, and considering its very bad repu-

I doubt I'd ever want to deal with that agency.

'Speaking of such things, I've just gone and joined SFWA. I was debating for a while whether or not it was worthwhile, but I have become convinced it is. The immediate cause was an argument at Midwestern with someone I shall call Ned Lumber, who is connected with what I'll call Lent Press, who vehemently defends Leland Sapiro in what he did to Sandra Meisel, and generally has an attitude of utmost contempt for writers and the whole concept of writers' rights. Doesn't understand (and flatly denies) that it is necessary for a publisher to maintain good relations with the professional community if he expects submissions of any quality. He really should have a long talk with Arnie Abramson on this subject. My feeling is that as long as there are such bastards loose in publishing, we need something like SFWA (for which Lumber also has complete contempt) to apply the thumbscrews. Publishing ceases to be a gentlemanly business at that level. I doubt I'll ever have anything to do with Lent Press.

'It's true that SFWA has seriously discredited itself by failing to deal with GALAXY, but I'm very favorably impressed by the Ace audit, and the Haldeman vs. Pocket Books affair. The remarkable thing is that, as far as I've been able to tell, no other writers' organization said a word in protest over a contract which amounts to serfdom. One of the mainstream groups in New York has a file of problems with publishers, but they won't let anyone see it! Which, of course, renders all the information useless. It's necessary to be very public in this sort of thing. (Which leads me to mention I've been having troubles with TK Graphics which would make your hair stand on end, and I would seriously advise authors to withdraw any manuscripts they have submitted there. Contributors to anthologies should withdraw their work individually if their editor hasn't withdrawn the whole package.) When you think about it, SFWA, for all its awkwardness at times, is the only writers' organization visible (with the exception of the Hollywood Screenwriters' Guild) which has any teeth. It deserves support.

'By the way, I'm selling copies of my TK Graphics titles, but the postal rates went up, so now I want \$3.50 for SF VOICES and \$2.50 for ESSAYS LOVECRAFTIAN. Why am I selling my own book? When it became clear the royalty situation was hopeless, I asked for payment in copies so at least I might get some

money out of the two titles. (Nothing more of mine will be published by T.K. Graphics, by the way, but I have good prospects for other publishers for the books I have withdrawn.)

((I've heard unconfirmed reports that the new management at Pocket Books has cooperated with SFWA and come up with a new contract which is a vast improvement. As you say, SFWA apparently does have some clout, nowadays. That may be a result of the boom in sf.

((For those wishing to acquire Darrell's books or ask about them, his address is: 113 Deepdale Road, Strafford, PA 19087.))

LETTER FROM JOHN SHIRLEY

Aug. 31, 1978

'The SFWA report on Pocket Books was appalling. Their terms are worse, even, than the contracts I've been signing. I've signed several book contracts lately and I thought I was agreeing to monstrous terms (rationalizing: well, when you're young, you've got to take what you can get till you have a sales record). I, for one, would not accept a contract from Pocket Books, no matter how my agent wheedled me, unless they radically revised them. Jawboning isn't enough. Sue the bastards. Trash their offices.

'Writers have other occupational vicissitudes. The number of alcoholic writers I've met is astonishing. I'm 25, have been a non-drinker, scoffing at writers who needed to drink -- until this year. It all comes down to the caffeine/alcohol vicious circle, with me. I'm habituated to caffeine, my only stimulant. I have to have a cup of coffee to get started writing. I'm not sure why. It may be psychological, as Phil Dick's need for speed was. I've managed to cut down -- I'm down to two cups a day, and I'm producing more material than ever. But coffee keeps me awake -- and more so as I get older. That, and worrying about the other uncertainties inherent to the writing career. So I started drinking to make myself sleepy. Now I find it hard to get to sleep, after writing (which itself hypes me up somewhat), without having drunk at least a quart of beer or several shots of whiskey. I feel myself beginning to crave the stuff more and more often. I'm getting scared.

'But I can't go without sleep, and I can't sleep after drinking coffee and writing and I can't write without caffeine (I've tried a few times -- the bleary results were shattering to my ego. I just can't wake up without the stuff). And having drunk caffeine I need booze to take the edge off it and make it possible for me to sleep (and to cut through the worries about contracts, deadlines, divorces) and so on and so on. Trapped!

'If there was a Schick Center for the Control of Coffee Drinking, I'd go. I feel shitty when I don't have the stuff, in the morning -- or when about to begin writing. It's a real physical addiction... Anybody out there know a way out of this? Probably many others suffer from it.'

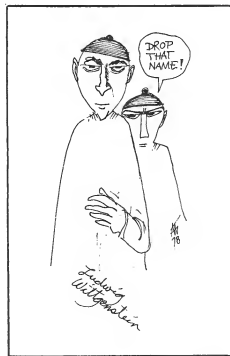
((I know what you mean about coffee. I was into a four-five-six cup a day routine until a few weeks ago.

You have a busy day ahead and a deadline. You haven't had enough sleep, so you drink coffee to get the cobwebs out of your brain... and drink more to keep the tiredness at bay. Then you find sleep hard to come by and the next day having had only about five hours rest, you have to have coffee to get anything done.

For me, wine or mixed drinks only mask the caffeine in my system, and when the alcohol wears off---

Part of the problem for older writers is their basal metabolism has slowed and they don't want to slow down with it...so they flog their system with stimulants.

At present I do with weak tea,



and find I get more sleep and don't need the coffee. But of course sometimes I want to stay awake late and use coffee for that...but find I always seem to wake up at 7:00 or 7:15 A.M. regardless....so have to use coffee....))

((Since you wrote, the new Pope has died (was that a Godly veto?) and Jack lives on. In fact, I should have a letter from him printed further on in the magazine.))

LETTER FROM ARTHUR TOFFE

Sept. 1978

'I am a bit puzzled over David A. Truesdale's letter in your #27 issue. Inasmuch as my name is included in the letter as a "reliable source", I suppose I had better voice my opinion about whether or not Ray Palmer believed what he wrote about the UFO and Shaver Mystery.

'Frankly, I never read anything of his after he left AMAZING. But I did know Ray pretty well.

'If he persuaded Truesdale that he believed what he wrote, that was probably his exact intention. The readers of his publications (from Amherst, Wisconsin) were the kind of nuts that would believe anything. So Ray undoubtedly played up to it.

'Since when does it become necessary for science fiction writers to believe what we write? Also, having written a far-out story, why can't we say (with a straight face and our tongue firmly lodged in our cheek) that we believe it?

'We'll never know for sure whether Ray believed in the stuff he put out from Amherst. But I do know he had a nutty audience for his publications. Is it truly a "hoax" (as Truesdale says) on Ray's part to give that squirrely bunch what they wanted to read? To do that he would almost have to make them believe he was as nutty as they.

'Let that be the end of this silly dispute.'

((I'd rather believe Ray was sincere in his non-fiction speeches, editorials, etc., than a cynical liar and manipulator pushing a phoney Truth and False Reality.

INERTIA TAKES ALL THE
FUN OUT OF ENTROPY.



There may have been a small degree of that, but he seemed oriented to that sphere from the beginning, and kept with it. He didn't make a fortune off Flying Saucers and etc. so I think he was into it by way of a basic character/personality need or inclination.))

8-31-78 Ummm...let me amend my statement last issue about feeling book publishers have no right to claim a big share of movie, TV, foreign rights sales, etc.

I still don't think they have a right, but I'm realistic enough to know that they have the power to take such slices of the pie. The big boys do.

It is rare that a big movie rights sale occurs without a biggie publisher having first given the book its national display and perhaps a push via advertising.

They are all owned by bigger corporations, conglomerates, banks, etc....like handing big cash from one hand to another for media display and bookkeeping advantages.

So a writer is in the position of being royally screwed, but being paid sometimes extremely well for it...and knowing that there is no way he could get that kind of Big Money without the biggies playing their big money games with each other.

Of course, the bigger a writer gets the more he can command of the pie. So it comes down to paying dues and waiting for lightning to strike.

CARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH

Sept. 2, 1978

'Ok, I'll be succinct, as you request, in my response to SFR #27. But I did want to reply to David A. Truesdale's questions about Roy Palmer and the Shaver Mystery. No, I don't think Ray was spiteful -- nor snubbing his nose at us. But anyone acquainted with his career -- and his personal statements -- would realize that he placed a great deal of importance on making money. And the Shaver Mystery, plus some of the other offbeat notions he promulgated, did just that for him. If he laughed at us, it was only on his way to the bank.

'On a more serious note, as I sit here and gaze at the cover of the current issue of TIME magazine, I am struck by how much the new Pope resembles Jack Williamson. Do you think....? Oh, I know it couldn't be, and yet....'

9-4-78 I got a call from Elton Elliott last night from the SF Worldcon in Phoenix. I won the Best Fan Writer Hugo.

Wow. That's...four years in a row, I think. Once again, thank you all. It makes me glow all over. I sends (still!) chills down my spine.

Except...I've now g-got t-t-ten Hugos...and back in 1967 w-w-when I s-s-signed that p-pact with the devil--my soul in exchange for ten Hugos---I never d-dreamed the p-p-p-p-payoff would come so s-s-s-s-s-soon!

SAVE ME!!!

DEAN R. LAMBE notes that 'articles guidelines from OMNI (formerly NOVA) require manuscripts written in 45 character lines to "facilitate editing". Fucking computers are taking over!'

Cost considerations are taking over as usual. Time is ~~not~~ purchasing power. Why object to a 45 character line if you don't object to double-spacing and wide margins as it is? And anyway, pleasing a computer might be easier than pleasing an editor.

Speaking as an editor, I am impressed and pleased by a professionally prepared and presented manuscript; it says to me the writer knows his business, cares enough to send a neat ms., and thinks me of sufficient importance to merit first class submissions.

I do not like sloppy typing, single-spaced, from edge-to-edge, with a lot of strikeouts and mendings, with a worn-out ribbon. Nor am I impressed by lack of return envelopes and postage. And old, reused envelopes turn me off, too. BUT---if the writing is fine, all is forgiven.

A LETTER FROM MICHAEL MOORCOCK
August, 1978

'Thanks for SFR #26, which I'm enjoying.

'In Darrell Schweitzer's review of SWORDS AGAINST DARKNESS III, he says that he would have revised his

ideas about horse-riding if he had read Anderson first. Surely this very intrusion of "realism" into what is fundamentally a symbolic genre is what has wrecked Anderson's own fantasy stories (the revision of THE BROKEN SWORD is a horrible example) and will produce a kind of literal-minded sword and sorcery which has all the defects of "hard" sf, with none of its virtues?

'Anderson, De Camp and others in their own non-literary way are probably doing as much to make prospective authors of the genre as self-conscious as they are made by, say, the Clarion workshops. It's astonishing how people will work away at the very foundations of genres they enjoy without ever once -- apparently -- being aware of the fundamental virtues of those genres.

'Anyone who's ever ridden a bloody horse knows what slow-moving, lazy, short-winded beasts they are, but the horse to sword and sorcery is what PTL Drive is to science fiction and the simple inclusion of the word "magic-" or the phrase (for instance) "preternaturally hardy h. of the Cockbinnae tribesmen" will allow the imagination to continue at full gallop, as it were. But what the fuck.'

((Yes, but that little phrase that rationalises the endless full gallop is the same as the phrase that makes ffl travel believable.

For me, even heroica fantasy has to have some elements of brutal reality to be believable. Too much magic and not enough sword is as bad as too much "nuts and bolts" and not enough symbolism. To my mind, it is the small realisms that lend believability to the magical elements. Like a unicorn limping because of a Xerty bush thorn in his hoof....))

9-5-78 You may have been wondering why the promised Terry Carr interview isn't in this issue.

The problem is that Terry talked too softly, the mike was too far from him, and there was too much background noise. Result is mush and a few understandable words.

. And I have learned that accepting (provisionally) interviews-on-tape is a horrendous mistake. People talk and talk and talk.... For two hours....three hours....

What the interviewer expects me/us to do is do his preliminary editing and transcription for him.

I won't do that again.

Interviews submitted to SFR from now on will be typed. We cannot take the time to transcribe and edit

from tape. No.

So the taped interviews listed as in-hand are likely not to be published here unless the interviewer wants to do the preliminary work first.

I'll use, this issue, a recently acquired interview with C. J. Cherryh, conducted by Gale Burnick. The Brunner and Moorcock interviews are in line first, but I need a shorter interview this issue. You may see them both in the January issue.

LETTER FROM ORSON SCOTT CARD Sept. 1978

'I just got back from my first World Science Fiction Convention, at which I had a lovely time discovering that every SF & F writer I actually had a chance to talk to was nice, besides being talented. I was disturbed, however, by a couple of things. I have loved Harlan Ellison's work for many years, but only recently heard of his enfant terrible reputation. The feuds, the quarrels, etc. -- I didn't know what to expect. What I found, in all of Ellison's public appearances that I attended, was a highly moral man with a tremendous gift of self-expression who is the best damn entertainer I've seen on any stage in a long time. Agree or disagree, it's impossible not to watch Ellison

'The trouble was, however, that I soon realized that the audience was watching Ellison and accepting him as if he were on television. As if he were Don Rickles. "It's you bastards who made STAR WARS a success by going to see it ten or twenty times", he snarled, and the audience cheered. No one can tell me that audience didn't contain hundreds and hundreds of people who deserved exactly the abuse Ellison was hurling at them. Why were they clapping and cheering? Had they changed their minds? Of course not -- they plan to see STAR WARS a dozen more times. They were clapping and cheering because Ellison's such a good show and he's so funny when he's pissed off. They weren't taking the man seriously, and that made me sick. Because if there's anybody in the world of SF fandom who ought to be taken very, very seriously, it's Harlan Ellison. There is no better writer in the world right now; there are few people who have as keen a vision as he, nor as willing a disposition to take on all the dragons of the world with a sharp, but not-very-long sword; and to have his fervor accepted by an audience as entertainment is sad.

'Of course, Ellison plays for the laughs and the entertainment, too. If he didn't love it, he wouldn't be so good at it. And that makes me even sadder, because he of all people should realize when he is doing, not Tom Paine, but Don Rickles. No audience ever loved Johnny Carson better than that World-con audience loved Harlan Ellison. I'm glad Ellison is taking his leave from fandom and fan events. You can't laugh and chuckle at "Croat-oam" and forget it fifteen minutes later. Behind a typewriter Ellison is a great man. In front of an audience he's a great entertainer. And never the twain shall meet.'

9-7-78 The speculation/charge that Harlan Ellison may have "stolen" the idea of DANGEROUS VISIONS from a pocketbook series titled TABOO from the early Sixties [in Scott Edelman's letter in SFR #27] has been refuted and demolished by information not-to-be-doubted received today.

Briefly, Harlan originated the TABOO anthology idea in 1960 or so, tried to sell it to Regency, and then turned to project over to Paul Niemark in 1961. Several stories had been submitted and two of the authors went along with the change in editorship. Volume One of TABOO was published in 1964.

It would be nice if nasty speculations and jumped conclusions could be avoided in the future.

REVIEW OF DR. STRANGE (TV)

The network (damned if I can remember which one) decided it its arcane, esoteric, stupid way, to make a 2-hour TV movie to debut its adaptation of the DR. STRANGE comic book hero. It had good elements: Evil vs. the good old modern sorcerer who passes on the power and the challenge and the duty to a younger man; the evil, beautiful, ruthless woman agent-on-Earth of the evil power/demon/devil/alien; good special effects.

But it had a bad writer who, faced with two hours and a limited imagination, had to pad and stretch to the point of a draggy, boring, dull series of scenes.

It should have been fast-paced, daring, vivid, even mind-blowing and in its way a serious aspect of Good vs. Evil on Earth.

It was a drag. And I turned it off after a half hour.

ALIEN THOUGHTS CONT. ON P.12

BEYOND GENOCIDE

BEYOND GENOCIDE

BEYOND GENOCIDE

SPEECH DELIVERED AT AGGIECON, COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS, APRIL 1, 1978

I have a confession to make: I happen to have a severe difficulty with anything to do with calendars. I've got a digital watch that tells me the month and the date, but it doesn't tell me whether it's Monday or Tuesday, and I'm completely at sea. And I didn't realize until today that I was going to be speaking on April first. And then I said, "Dummy!" I know that Bob Tucker would want and expect me to come up with some really huge flimflam, and I didn't have one ready; so I apologize for that. But instead of trying to work some con on you, I'm going to come right out and tell you that certain rumors that are floating around are not true. It's not true, for instance, that Larry Niven is about to undergo open-pocket surgery. And it's not true that Bob Tucker was seen passing out cards to the goats on the experimental farm. That's not true at all.

Now I'm going to talk to you a little bit about time travel. Most people think it's fantasy; L. Sprague de Camp, in fact, said that all time travel stories are by definition fantasy, because it's scientifically impossible. But I'm here to tell you that he's wrong: You can travel in time. There are just two little things wrong with it -- you can only travel in one direction, and you can only go at the rate of one second per second. So it's taken me about forty years to get here from 1938. (Interesting trip. Used up a lot of toilet paper on the way.)

One of the differences that I notice, as a traveler from 1938, is that people have a lot more hair than they used to. In 1938 we went to the barber twice a week, and he

would shave the back of your neck, and he would clip the sides, so that what was left on top, for a teenager, looked kind of like the top of a turnip. And now the men of my acquaintance have so much hair that it's hard to tell them apart without the name tags. (I myself believe in a decent moderation.)



It's really hard for anybody who wasn't there to realize how poverty-stricken we science fiction fans were in 1938. There were three magazines; you could read a magazine in a day and a half, and then what would you do for the rest of the month? And there were practically no books. The idea of publishing science fiction books in hardcover as a regular thing was not invented until 1950. And there were no paperbacks. We haunted libraries for science fiction; we read all the Wells and Verne that we could find. And we cruised around in second-hand bookstores, just going down the stacks looking at titles; and we were disappointed a lot. Things like MAN OF TWO WORLDS -- we thought that was it, but no, it was about an Eskimo.

And fanzines have changed so much. When I came along, there had been some printed fanzines -- people had little Kelsey presses that cost \$15 -- but most of them were done either on the mimeograph or the hektograph. I believe there is hardly a person alive today who knows anymore what a hektograph is, so I'm going to explain it to you. It was a little tray into which you would pour some gelatin, which formed a thick layer, kind of like rubber; and you would type or draw on a piece of paper with hektograph ink, which was a smeary, intensely purple ink -- in fact, it had a scum on it that was green, it was so purple. And then you would lay the sheet down on top of the gelatin and leave it there for a few minutes, and this ink would sink into the gelatin, and then after removing the master you would put another sheet of paper down and pull it off, and there would be a copy.

And you could do this about a hundred times before it became illegible. So our fanzines were limited to a circulation of one hundred, which we never achieved. They nominally sold for a dime or thereabouts, but I don't think I ever had more than two or three paying customers for my fanzine, SNIDE. We would send these things out to a mailing list of other fans, and we would get their fanzines back, or maybe not, but we had to get rid of the damn things some way. I sent one to Adolf Hitler in Berchtesgaden; at the time that seemed like a funny thing to do. I later found out that Hitler was not all that funny, but I'll tell you something funny I did find out recently about him. I recently read John Toland's two-volume biography of Hitler, and learned that among the various ailments that Hitler suffered from all his life was something I had never heard of, called meteorism. Lovely word: Do you know what it means? It means "uncontrollable farting".

Another thing that has changed about fans is that not only couldn't we make a profit out of our fanzines, but we certainly couldn't dream of ever making a living; and now I believe there are at least three fans who are making a living off their fanzines, not even counting Ted White.

Another thing that you can't believe unless you've been there is the isolation that we suffered. I grew up in a little town called Hood River, Oregon, and as far as I could determine, I was the only one in that town who had ever heard of science fiction. I went around leaving notes in science fiction magazines for other people to find; I dropped some in the city reser-

By
DAMON KNIGHT

view, until the guy's little son came out to tell me I'd be arrested if I did that any more. Nothing ever worked.

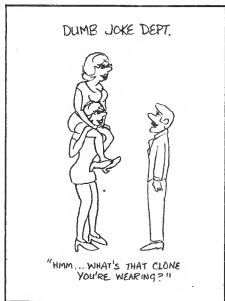
If you did happen to strike somebody who had heard of science fiction, they knew immediately what it was; it was that crazy Buck Rogers stuff. Jack Williamson in the thirties went to a psychiatrist -- this story is a little bit apocryphal, but Jack wouldn't mind my telling you -- and in his first interview the psychiatrist asked him what he did. He said, "I write science fiction". The psychiatrist said, "What's that?" and Jack explained, "Well, it's about things like spaceships and robots, that kind of thing". And the doctor said, "Well, we'll soon cure you of that."

My very uninformed guess is that in 1938 there might have been as many as five hundred fans. And my also very uninformed guess is that there must be at least ten thousand in this country now. I have extrapolated this in a very scientific manner, and I conclude that by 2020 A.D. there will be one and a half million of us, and we can start our own political party. In the year 2500 we'll take over the world.

Now, money: This is a difficult subject. In the thirties, if you got half a cent a word on publication, you were lucky. E.E. Smith received for his efforts in writing *THE SKYLARK OF SPACE* the sum of \$125, which he split with his collaborator. Today advance payments to authors of science fiction novels of ten thousand, thirty thousand, a hundred thousand dollars are no longer unheard-of. If you went back in time and talked to Ed Hamilton about the year 1978, and if you said we'd had a man on the Moon and we've got orbital satellites, and radar, and coin vending machines, he would have said, "Yeah, yeah", but if you had told him about that hundred thousand bucks, he would have said, "Forget it."

Now I have to mention sex. In the nineteen thirties, the strongest word you could expect to find in a magazine was "damn", and even that was a little unusual. Now you can find every conceivable sexual act described in complete detail in the best-selling novels in the supermarkets. But the magazines especially were very uptight about this; they were afraid of censorship, and they policed themselves very carefully. There was a series of stories in *ARGOSY* by Arthur Leo Zagat, about a post-Armageddon world in which nobody had survived but a bunch of teenagers. And they had to find out how to reproduce the race by trial and error.

Some of you probably know that the watchdog of morality on *ASTOUNDING*, later *ANALOG*, was not John Campbell but a lady named Kay Tarrant. John didn't have anything to do with the minor details of running that magazine, he just read stories and talked to authors. And he trusted Kay Tarrant to excuse anything that might offend anybody, and of course she did. But the authors liked to tease her about this; they would write things into their stories that they knew she would blue-pencil, just for fun. One time this backfired. George O. Smith wrote a story and introduced into it the following riddle: "What is the world's most perfect ball-bearing mousetrap? Answer: A tomato." And Kay Tarrant didn't get it, and it appeared in the magazine.



Things have changed so much, even in *ANALOG*. I talked to Ben Bova a few weeks ago when he was in Oregon for a writers' conference, and just for curiosity I asked him, "Ben, what's the strongest word you have used in *ANALOG*?" And he said, "Well, in one story we used the word 'fuck'. And the next month we got several letters from subscribers saying, 'If you ever use that word again, I'll cancel my subscription.'" And Ben says he wrote back, "Will you be a little more precise? Which word?"

Then we have conventions. As far as I can find out, at the first worldcon in 1939 there were about two hundred people. Now we have four thousand, seven thousand -- I don't know what the limit is, or whether there'll be a hall big enough to hold us in about ten years.

And we've done a lot of things to give science fiction a little tradition -- we've got the Society

for Creative Anachronism, and we've got the Dorsai Irregulars -- somebody out to pit them against each other in a pitched battle, by the way -- but I think we need more of these traditions. We should absolutely wear propeller beanies to all official functions. We ought to celebrate Gernsback's birthday, which, by the way, is August 16th -- make a note. We could have an annual fan feud in Futureworld, with zap guns and water pistols. How about an H.P. Lovecraft ice-cream eating contest? I think the record is twenty-eight pints. On the first day of spring, we could celebrate the New Wave by having Michael Moorcock get into a full bathtub at the top of Market Street.

And I certainly think we should revive the Elron. Does anybody know what the Elron is? It's an award for the worst science fiction story of the year, consisting of a bronzed lemon. We could have a film festival consisting entirely of out-takes from *MY MOTHER THE CAR*, and an annual award for the most moving farewell to science fiction. I envisage this as a life-size statuette of mad dogs kneeling Harlan Ellison in the groin.

In the thirties and for quite a while afterward we always had one or two token women writers; we had Leslie F. Stone, and then we had C. L. Moore, and Leigh Brackett. And the highest compliment, of course, was to say to one of these women, "You write just like a man". Lately we've had a lot more women writers, most of them extremely good. My wife pointed out to me some time ago that this was not equality, because we ought to have more mediocre women writers. And she's right, and now we've got a few. After all, if you're a mediocre writer, why should you have to be a man to get published?

Before I go on, I'd better tell you a little bit about where I'm coming from. I'm a white Anglo-Saxon protestant, and a lifelong heterosexual. I'm married to Kate Wilhelm, and I have two sons, two daughters, and two stepsons. My knowledge of the position of women in society is kind of by observation and hearsay; I've never been there and I can't know what it feels like to be a woman. I guess I could call myself, if not a feminist, then a fellow-traveler. In *ORBIT* I think I must have averaged about twenty-five to thirty percent stories by women writers, and once or twice I got it up to fifty percent, which I think is where it belongs. And I'm telling you all this not to seek praise, but just to let you know where I'm standing when I say what I'm going to say next.

One thing that I notice happening in science fiction over the last ten years doesn't please me at all. In the fifties there was a general attitude of what I think of as a healthy skepticism. We looked behind things; we said, "What's wrong with it?" We said, "Oh, yeah?" In the last decade I've seen a swing of the pendulum back to an attitude of romantic idealism which disturbs and distresses me. There has always been a strong strain of messianism and utopianism in science fiction, all the way up from Gernsback, who was quite sure that AMAZING STORIES would save the world by educating people to become scientists. And at that time we also had the Technocrats, who were running around in their uniforms, which consisted of double-breasted gray business suits. This kind of thing was in the air -- we were looking for ideal solutions, easy solutions, to bring about utopia. That all faded away in the fifties, I think, because we'd seen what the results of some of these utopian programs were. Now it's coming back

I used to try to start arguments with people by asking them which they thought the more dangerous, the stupids or the crazies. I realized only recently that I was dead wrong about both categories: It isn't the stupids or the crazies that we have to worry about, it's the fanatic idealists. Hitler was one. He was not crazy, he was not stupid, but he was utterly committed to an ideal. It's so easy to conclude that we'll have utopia if we kill all the Jews, or all the bourgeois, or the bolsheviks, or the blacks, or the whites.

Recently, Alice Sheldon (James Tiptree, Jr.) wrote a letter published in FRONTIERS, A JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S STUDIES, fall 1977. This is what she said:

"I think we could make it if some disease came along and wiped out 999 men out of every thousand. Otherwise I fear that the moment some of the things that are apt to go wrong happen, it will be blamed on our 'freedom' and we will be back as property."

For a while after I read that letter I could not believe she meant it. Then I began to think about her story "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" I think most of you have probably read this story, but let me summarize it briefly. Three astronauts have run into a solar flare and have been thrown forward in time three hundred years. They are picked up by another spaceship, and find out gradually that about three hundred years ago a virus wiped out all the male human beings; society is now totally fe-

male, and they're terrifically happy. These women, all that we see or hear about, are beautifully adjusted, cheerful, cooperative, happy people. And the three men, the only representatives we have left of the male half of the human race, are a weakling, a brute, and a crazy old man. Under the influence of a hypnotic drug, the brute makes a rather clumsy attempt at rape on one of the women, and the crazy old man tries to take over the ship by force; the weakling helps to subdue him. And then the protagonist realizes that what's going to happen to all three of them is that they're going to be killed.

I looked back at some other stories, and I saw the same pattern, the same statement, that we can have utopia if we just get rid of all the men. It's in "When It Changed" and "The Female Man" by Joanna Russ, and it's in two other stories



by Alice Sheldon, "Your Faces, O My Sisters, Your Faces Filled of Light", and "The Women Men Don't See". And I admit that this is a very small wave so far. But I went back a little further, and did the homework I should have done years ago. I read some of the writings of the radical wing of the feminist movement, and I found out that the same ideas are there. You find it in Valerie Solanis, the founder of SCUM, The Society for Cutting Up Men, and in LESBIAN NATION by Jill Johnston, which I guess is kind of the bible of the radical feminists now. And they're saying essentially that there's no way to cure the evils of society without getting rid of men.

I suppose this is something that's inevitable, in the same way that the black movement evolved from the NAACP to Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver. We have to expect

that, and in a sense we can see that it's justified; there's a lot of hatred bottled up in women that has to come out some way. And I'm not saying that these stories should not have been written or that they should not have been published. I'm not even talking about this particular manifestation. What I'm saying is that it alarms me when stories like these are received with enthusiasm, or at most in approving silence, by science fiction readers. I would like to see a return of skepticism; I would like us not to go down the tube again. It's so easy for even an intelligent and rational person, once you admit the overwhelming importance of some goal, to conclude logically that in order to achieve it you must kill large numbers of people. Male human beings are about 49% of the human race, which I guess adds up to about two billion people. Hitler only killed six million.

I haven't got a crystal ball, and I don't know what form the next wave of messianic idealism is likely to take; I doubt that it will be a radical feminism. But as long as we are sitting around with our mouths open, we are suckers for the next charismatic leader who comes along with a simplistic formula for utopia.

My notion is that one of the reasons for the present wave of popularity of science fiction is that people remember some of the things we said in the past. We weren't always wrong. We weren't wrong about atomic power, men on the Moon, radar and all that stuff, and they remember this; I think to some extent they listen to us. Science fiction has a long history of admonitory satire, and I think it's possible at least that when 1984 comes it won't be the future that Orwell wrote about, because he wrote 1984. So it's my hope that those of you who are writers, or who hope to be writers, will try to recapture the skepticism that we had in the nineteen-fifties, so that you can pass it on through the medium of science fiction, and give the world a little bit of a push. We're going into what will probably be the toughest period in our history, and if we come out of it alive we're going to be very lucky. Perhaps it's impudent of me to suggest that science fiction writers could do anything about this, but it seems to me that there is just a chance, and we've got to try.



JOHNNY WIRECUTTER

BY NEAL WILGUS

Johnny was a nudist
but we didn't know what kind
till that winter of 1999.
We were up on Roarin Creek
stringin telepop line
campin at the entrance
to the Odd John Mine.
We were at the camp
awaitin for the wind to unwind,
we were playin cards and drinkin
but our checks were unsigned.
When the lights went out
a howl went up,
an ungodly whine,
and we all went out
to look around,
to see what we could find.
And there was Johnny Wirecutter
lookin so fine,
naked in the snowdrifts,
he didn't pay us any mind.
He was cuttin wire and singin
in the pale moonshine
and we all just stood agapin
as he finished his design.
He'd taken tools from our popter
but he left them all behind
when he finished chopin cables
and let the wires intertwine.
We expected him to cut and run
into the forest pine
but he turned and waved
and came toward us
and a chill went down our spine.
But he walked right up
and hailed us
and gave the peace sign
and said he wanted us to understand
why he'd put us in this bind.
He said the world of man
had reached the point
where it must now decline,
and that a super-race like Johnny
would bring life closer to divine.
He said he cut our fense and cables
in order to remind
that without our lights and poptech
and our precious turbine
we're at the mercy of the forest
and the howling canine.

He said for now that he would leave us
so our thoughts we could refine,
though he was doubtful
that we'd see his point
for men were so blind.
Then he loped away in moonlight
like a slim feline
and there was nothing we
could do that night
but drown our woes in wine.
It took a week of heavy marchin
from the mountains to the brine
and all the way we found the wires cut---
snapped like rotten twine.
We marched through city after city
and to a halt we saw them grind
but we never saw old Johnny
or any of his kind.
But we know they're there awatchin
as our survivors recombine---
we're on the run now
like the wolves were
and the wolves are enshrined.

End.



From IGUANACON the full and complete list of Hugo and related award winners for 1977 (Awarded in 1978).

BEST NOVEL: GATEWAY by Frederick Pohl [St. Martin's Press; Galaxy, Nov. 1976 to March 1977.]

2. **The Forbidden Tower** by Marion Zimmer Bradley [DAW Books.]
3. **Lucifer's Hammer** by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle [Playboy Press; Fawcett.]

BEST NOVELLA: STARDANCE by Spider & Jeanne Robinson [Analog, March 1977.]

2. **In the Hall of the Marian Kings** by John Varley [F&SF, February 1977.]
3. **Aztec** by Vonda N. McIntyre [2076: The American Tricentennial, ed. Edward Bryant, Pyramid.]

BEST NOVELETTE: "Eyes of Amber" by Joan Vinge [Analog, June 1977.]

2. **"Ender's Game"** by Orson Scott Card [Analog, August 1977.]
3. **"The Screwfly Solution"** by Raccoona Sheldon [Analog, June 1977.]

BEST SHORT STORY: "Jeffy Is Five" by Harlan Ellison [F&SF, July 1977.]

2. **"Air Raid"** by John Varley (as Herb Boehm, Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine, Spring 1977.)
3. **"Dog Day Evening"** by Spider Robinson [Analog, October 1977.]

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION: STAR WARS [Twentieth Century Fox.]

2. **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** [Columbia Pictures.]
3. **BLOOD! The Life and Future Times of Jack the Ripper** by Robert Bloch & Harlan Ellison [Alternate World Recordings.]

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: RICK STERNBACH

2. Frank Kelly Freas
3. Stephen Fabian

BEST PROFESSIONAL EDITOR: GEORGE SCITHERS

2. Edward L. Ferman
3. Ben Bova

BEST AMATEUR MAGAZINE: LOCUS, edited by Charles & Dena Brown

2. **SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW**, edited by Richard E. Geis
3. **JANUS**, edited by Janice Bogstad & Jeanne Gomoll

BEST FAN WRITER: RICHARD E. GEIS

2. Susan Wood
3. No Award

BEST FAN ARTIST: PHIL FOGLIO

2. Grant Canfield
3. Alexis Gilliland

THE JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD: ORSON SCOTT CARD ["Ender's Game," Analog, August 1977.]

2. **Stephen R. Donaldson** [LORD FOUL'S BANE, Holt, 1977.]
3. **Jack L. Chalker** [A JUNGLE OF STARS, Ballantine, 1976.]

THE GANDALF AWARD FOR GRAND MASTER OF FANTASY: POUL ANDERSON

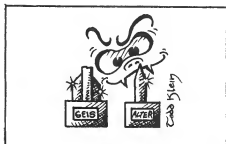
2. Ursula K. Le Guin

THE GANDALF AWARD FOR BEST BOOK-LENGTH FANTASY: THE SILMARILLION

by J.R.R. Tolkien [Edited by Christopher Tolkien, Houghton Mifflin.]

2. **Our Lady of Darkness** by Fritz Leiber [Berkley, published as The Pale Brown Thing, F&SF January-February 1977.]
3. **Lord Foul's Bane** by Stephen R. Donaldson [Holt]

1246 final ballots were counted; only in the dramatic presentation category did the winner achieve a majority on the first count; and only in the Amateur Magazine, Fan Writer, and Fan Artist categories did No Award place above sixth place, achieving respectively 12%, 16%, and 14% of the votes cast.



TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES CAST IN EACH CATEGORY:

Novel: 1130
Novella: 1048
Novelette: 1007
Short Story: 1042
Dramatic Presentation: 1220
Professional Artist: 1078
Professional Editor: 1150
Amateur Magazine: 958
Fan Writer: 903
Fan Artist: 868
John W. Campbell Award: 990
Grand Master: 1147
Book-length Fantasy: 1030

---James Corrick
---Gay Miller

REG COMMENT: No real surprises until Best Pro Editor... The ASIMOV policy of encouraging new talent and of emphasizing story and wonder over literary quality may explain George's win.

With LOCUS surging into the 8000+ circulation figure now and with a paid staff...and no longer in the amateur fanzine category, the future looks bright for SFR, one might think. All of my major competition has graduated to the pro ranks. I certainly hope so.

9-9-78 Elton Elliott visited today, bringing with him the Best Fan Writer Hugo which he accepted for me at Iguanacón.

It is indeed a handsome item: the nickel spaceship next to a plaque upon which is mounted an inscribed plate giving all the information.

Once again, I thank all who voted for me.

Elton was full of overflowing with experiences at the con... scandal... gossip.... None of which I dare repeat. It would seem that a modern World SF Convention is a place where friends and enemies are made, girls and women are made, lawsuits are made, contracts are made, reputations are made---and unmade....



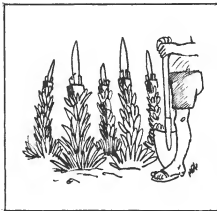
A group has been formed calling itself Science Fiction Consultants. Members are: Dan Alderson

Doug Crepeau
Richard Delap
Mike Jittlov
Walt Lee
Joyce McDaniel

They aim to advise those in the big media on how to make and present good, coherent sf. The old slap-dash junk put out for the unknowing masses isn't going to work anymore, they say, because all the kids are growing up having tasted the fruit of good sf, and the el crapola will be laughed off the screens and racks. Why not do it right in the first place?

Good question. I hope every hope that the Science Fiction Consultants do a lot of business. I would love to see some real GOOD sf for a change.

Incidentally, Richard Delap has told people lately that he will be reviving/continuing DELAP'S F & SF REVIEW on his own. That would be nice. But don't hold your breath.



9-18-78 Everybody will be passing opinions on BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, and so shall I. But first---

#THE CLONE MASTER presented the scriptwriter with all kinds of scientific and plausibility problems. He largely ignored them and no doubt hoped---if the pace was fast enough---that everyone else would, too.

The telepathic communication between clones and their "father" (from whom they are copies) I can buy, though why they cannot telepath between themselves is not explained, only asserted.

But what stops me is the ability of the two clandestinely funded scientists to grow these 13 clones within about a year, or two, and have them emerge (ripen) at a biological age of about thirty-five years.

And of course the real stopper

is their possessing the exact personality and character and memories of the prime person. DNA is wonderful, but....

They had to grow so fast, had to be linked telepathically to the "father" and above all had to have his memories (up to the point of their "conception") so they could get right into foiling the bad guy and saving their father. It would never do for them to emerge from the artificial wombs as infants and have to be educated, trained...for decades. TV cannot even conceive of a sf show that is so logical and plausible.

#STARSHIP INVASION was a UFO-type low budget and low grade credulity destroyer. I couldn't watch more than a few minutes of it. Even the skimpy costumes worn by the lovelies from space couldn't hold me.

#BATTLESTAR GALACTICA was impressive and good in all respects until it started to get into the love-lives and personal concerns of its young secondary characters, and indulged (calculatedly, of course) in a kid and his mechanical dog sub-sub plot.

It seemed to have been a two-hour movie married to a one-hour episode. The segment on the planet Carolinus (I think) was marred by some bloopers like how could the space fighter planes take off from the planet if they have to be launched from the Galactica from catapult tubes? How could the Cylons miss spotting all those jets on the planet? Oh, that whole episode sucks. It was on a par with the second and third year STAR TREK plots.

We're going to see the same old sf plots over and over, now. And they'll be butchered by lazy or who-gives-a-shit writers and directors and producers who don't think the viewing public cares. I'm sure they'll give us high-quality aliens and special effects, but I'm equally sure the stories will be so full of holes they'll destroy the enjoyment of millions of watchers.

Our wonderful, wonderful postal service is at it again. I went in to the central P.O. to see about a second class mailing permit for RICHARD E. GEIS and was told there has been a raise in the application fee...from \$30 to \$120. And there is a no-refund clause if the Washington D.C. boys turn you down.

This play is called Sticking It To The Little Guys, or Let's Make

It Too Costly For Any More Small Fry Publishers To Get The Subsidies Reserved For The Big Boys.

Of course I've known for a long time that the postal service considers low-circulation magazines a bloody nuisance. This confirms that knowledge. There is absolutely no justification for a 400% increase in the fee except a never-acknowledged desire to inhibit small-press publishing.

9-19-78 Talked to a Mr. Poole at the central post office this morning, on the phone, and he was kind enough to judge-in-advance that a second class application for REG would not be granted---and I'd lose my \$120. application fee. Why? Because the p.o. rules and regs require that a periodical contain writings by more than one person. Thus a personal journal opinion-zine is ineligible.

Weird. But that's the way they play and they make the laws.

He also said the fee was raised to \$120 for all applications regardless of circulation, because they figure it cost them that much to process an application in Washington, D.C. That's what they say.

9-21-78 I bought myself a copy of OMNI #1 and looked through it and must admit to a judgement that while the art is great the stories are not so great and the articles are turn-offs for me.

The magazine is a combination of science and pseudo science and fiction. A very high class production with no real focus. Is it trying to touch too many bases?

I got the impression of coolness, a kind of awareness that it wasn't people-oriented enough. I can't explain that.

I'll probably continue buying the magazine for the incredible artwork.

LETTER FROM JOHN MORRESSY
August 7, 1978

'Alter tried to do me in with his review of UNDER A CALCULATING STAR, but I bear no grudges. I'm renewing anyway.

ALIEN THOUGHTS CONT. ON P.40

AN INTERVIEW WITH



C.J. CHERRYH

CONDUCTED BY GALE BURNICK

July 16, 1978

C.J. Cherryh was born in St. Louis, went to college in Oklahoma, has an M.A. from Johns Hopkins University, is in her mid thirties, and has sold the following for publication:

GATE OF IVREL (Daw)	1976
BROTHERS OF EARTH (Daw, SFBC)	1976
HUNTER OF WORLDS (Daw, SFBC)	1977
"The Dark King" (YEAR'S BEST FANTASY #3)	1977
THE FADED SUN: KESRITH (Daw, SFBC, GALAXY)	1978
WELL OF SHIUAN (Daw)	
Sequel to GATE OF IVREL	1978
THE FADED SUN: SHON'JIR (Daw, SFBC)	1978
FIRES OF AZEROTH (Daw)	
Sequel to WELL OF SHIUAN	1979

Ms. Cherryh currently lives in Oklahoma City where she taught school before turning to full-time writing.

SFR: You've been writing since you were 10 years old and GATE OF IVREL was published in 1976 -- had you sold anything before that?

CHERRYH: No, I had tried for 7 years previous. I sent off manuscripts, whole manuscripts, and had the usual sort of things happen to them. For the last 3 years I gave up and started writing query letters. Every time I would get a query letter rejected I would go and either rewrite the manuscript or shelve it and write another book. Usually the latter. I figured that I either wasn't writing

good stories or I wasn't explaining them right. And possibly if I wasn't explaining them right, I couldn't write a good story. So I worked on my explanations a good deal. Eventually I began working on the theory that perhaps I couldn't explain them right because I didn't understand what I was writing. I had no contact with anyone who wrote. I never met anyone who wrote. I was too shy to go to the writers' meetings in the city, which wouldn't have helped anyway. I had to work out everything on my own. So I tried every kind of query letter. Finally, I decided to write one like a back blurb on a book, a little more modestly. I did, and that kind of explanation finally seemed to work.

For the first time, well, the first time in my career, if you could call it that, somebody, namely Don Wollheim, wrote back and said, "Sounds interesting, let's see it." Before that it was 3 years of mimeographed rejection slips stuffed sideways into envelopes, "Don't call us, we'll call you."

SFR: Did you ever use an agent at all?

CHERRYH: No, I didn't know what one was. Well, I did know, but you have to sell to get an agent, and I hadn't sold so I didn't have an agent. The only thing I knew about writing was what I'd read in books. There were no writers in my acquaintance, and I never had a creative writing course. One time I got into a technical problem with a company I was suspicious of. I went to ask a creative writing teacher, "What do you think about that?" He gave me some good advice which was, "Watch out for vanity presses." I was that naive, you know. It was basic advice: Never pay anybody to do anything for you. And at those words of wisdom I went off for another 5 years, stumbling around.

SFR: Are you considering taking on an agent?

CHERRYH: It's an idea I have left open, but right now I don't particularly feel the need of one. I work most comfortably with the least pressure possible, and I've seen some agents that possibly would be a source of pressure. I figure that when my affairs get so complicated that I can't keep track of them myself, then I need one.

SFR: Do you have more books under contract to Daw, or will we be seeing books from other publishers?

CHERRYH: I have a couple more books

contracted to Daw. Beyond that, I don't know except that I plan to keep on writing.

SFR: Has your interest in reading and/or writing been in science fiction and fantasy from way back, or is this something you've switched into?

CHERRYH: I've had no inclination really to write anything else from the time I was 10. Mundane literature just never appealed to me. You couldn't force me to read it. When I was a child I even hated the nursery rhymes that were mundane. It's just a lifelong taste. I think my father had something to do with it. When I had gotten through my "duty" for the week, my schoolwork, he got me Edgar Rice Burroughs to read, even when I was in first grade. So from the start I learned that science fiction and fantasy were a reward for good behavior, the other stuff was work.

SFR: What would you call your work? Do you call it either science fiction or fantasy, or do you separate the two?

CHERRYH: I do mentally separate the two. I keep referring to GATE OF IVREL and WELL OF SHIVAN as fantasy; Don (Wollheim) keeps saying they're science fiction. I can see his argument. I still insist they're fantasy, because I want to write fantasy. Basically, to me, in fantasy the technology is magic, and in science fiction the technology is technology or is absence of technology. Essentially it's a machine-type question. I love both of them. I consciously try alternately working on a fantasy piece and a science fiction piece because it flexes different muscles, as it were, and keeps me from falling into a pattern, at least one I can detect.

SFR: When we talked before, last year, of your writing habits you said you write one book, finish and go right on to another...

CHERRYH: I have a superstition that at all times I must have a book in the house or I may freeze up forever. I never finish a novel on a weekend when I can't get to a post office. The minute I finish it, it's into the box and out of the house. And before I go to bed that night I type the first line of my next novel or I can't sleep.

SFR: Have they always been novels since you started writing?

CHERRYH: Yes. The first thing I wrote was a novel. I'm not about to say what it is. Each chapter

took me one month. I was writing on Chieftain tablets with a big greasy pencil, illustrating every page. You can imagine a ten-year-old's illustrations. All the books I had ever read were illustrated, back in the days when they made nice pretty books. So I figured that every writer had to be an illustrator. It never dawned on me that they were done by two different people. I thought that if you were going to write you had to learn to draw too so that you could do the illustrations, otherwise people weren't going to take the book from you. I spent all that time learning art. I was that naive. No one told me any different.

SFR: Do you plot your books in advance, or do you kind of have a feeling about what you are doing as you go along?

CHERRYH: I do not make a detailed outline, really. I have varied ways of starting a book. The most common outline, if I'm going to be that formal, is to list ten things that are going to happen before the end, and those are my chapters. Only they never work out. They end up being twenty things and thirty things. Eventually, I put the outline away and never look at it again until I'm finished, then discover I haven't followed it. Often I don't know how a book will end. I think I do. I write toward the ending I have in mind, and then I get there and discover it doesn't end that way.

SFR: Do you have a particular future history? It seems that the series of books you're writing are separate futures.

CHERRYH: Yes, they sure are. Somebody wrote to me and said they were trying to reconcile my universe. They were trying to work the fantasy series in with the science fiction series and that was a problem. I had to say give up on that. If there will be any kind of coherency to do, I suppose the fantasy novels will all work together, although I am not so sure about that. And the science fiction novels will all work together, or at least they won't be exclusive of one another. I suppose everybody has some basic idea of what they think the future will be, but since my stories are set as far as 10,000 years in the future I have quite a long time to play with.

SFR: Are GATE OF IVREL, WELL OF SHIVAN and FIRES OF AZEROTH a trilogy or will there be further continuations?

CHERRYH: There will be continuations actually. I balk at the idea of writing a series which goes on and on and on and the characters never change. It seems to me like you'd just be writing the same book over and over and over again. I decided that to do a story that I could be happy with, people have to both live and die, things have to happen to them, changes have to be made which are irrevocable. The thing has to grow. If it doesn't, I can't go on writing the same book forever, always stuck at the same plateau, wherever that is. I made up my mind that every three books in each series will tell a complete story, which gives you beginning, middle and end, and although each one can be read separately. The next set of three will begin with the assumption that you haven't heard of these people before.

SFR: Is it true for the Faded Sun series, too?

CHERRYH: No, the FADED SUN is really one book. It's very long. I'm a young writer, as least as far as the number of things that I've written, and because I like the idea, I felt like I wanted to approach it slowly. It made sense to me to bring each part of it out one at a time and give myself time to think between installments. It did fall naturally into three divisions. I'm half way through the third book right now. In the meantime, I've plotted and nearly written another book, which I rarely do, except that I got a lot of threads together and I wanted to make sure I got them all. This fall I'm going to write the third book in the FADED SUN Trilogy. Although I knew from the beginning what it would be, I wanted to make sure that I would do it properly. I liked the first one, and the second one felt really good. That was a surprise to me because middle books of series tend to be awkward. Now I want to do the third one right.

SFR: You've been writing for many years, but you've only been published recently. How do you feel about your quick success and popularity?

CHERRYH: Well, a great deal of it is, I guess, in some ways unreal to me. I'm no different than I ever was. Naturally. I'm still the same mistake-prone character. It's very strange. I don't feel any differently than I ever did, except it certainly feels nice to be published. I would have settled for published. I enjoy creating the stories. That's my joy in doing things, and if I please people that makes me happy. I enjoy it when

body else enjoys what I'm doing.

SFR: You feel pressured now by your popularity and success, by people perhaps expecting more from you?

CHERRYH: I did for a little while. When I brought GATE (OF IVERI) out, I guess that I would have settled for published. I expected to be totally ignored by reviewers. I would have settled for selling a couple of thousand copies and saying, "I'm a published writer."

Then all of a sudden the reviews came out and said that this was an all-right book. That scared the hay out of me. I've always been a very private person and all of a sudden there they are, the public. People are saying what they liked about the first book and now I have to write the second book. I thought how I had planned to change these characters and if I change them, people who like them the way they were are going to be upset with me. Then I'm going to have to read all these reviews that say, "Oh, how terrible". I really worried about that for awhile.

Finally, I rearranged my thinking and said, "Well, you worked in private to do the first book so stop thinking about all of this and just get down to work; do the second book the best way you can." Which is all you can do in the first place. So I did. I haven't really fretted about that kind of thing since. I think that a new writer can run into that very easily. I've talked to other people who have had their first book published, and you brace yourself for a storm of criticism and it doesn't come. That's more frightening, I think, than if it did. Writers who have not been published are used to being rejected. They've got all the mechanisms for being rejected and then they're not any more. All of a sudden things aren't working according to plan. You think, "That was a perfect book, now I've got to write perfect literature."

You sit at your typewriter waiting for perfect sentences and of course they don't come. They were never there. So my basic philosophy is produce anything and then edit. I write by editing. I write anything that comes into my head and I edit the life out of it. Gradually, after re-writing and re-writing, it begins to take shape.

SFR: Then you do a number of drafts?

CHERRYH: People tell me that's not the way to work. They give me to understand that they sit down at

their typewriters, they begin to type and it all flows out. First draft goes off to the publisher. My first drafts aren't even coherent. I type things like g-h-h and I know what's t-h-e because I do that a lot. I may have whole lines that are written in virtual code. My typing is like that when I'm staring off into space and typing at high speeds.

I cut with scissors and I paste things together. I dig back into the wastecan and fish out something I threw away two days ago because, all of a sudden, I'm tearing everything out and hauling it back the way it was. Then I read what I did two days ago and it isn't as brilliant as I remembered it, so I throw it away. Then I paste it all back together and re-write it again and again and again. That's the way I work.



SFR: If it's any consolation, I've heard about as many different techniques from as many different writers. To get into another area that I'm not too sure how to approach... as a woman writing science fiction, the question comes to mind, well, not are you a feminist per se, but what is your thinking on such issues?

CHERRYH: All I ever ask is to allowed to do what I want to do, which is all I think any human being asks. Within reason. As long as I'm not

dramatizing anybody else. I've been very fortunate never to have run into a barrier. I've never beat my head against anything in the way of something I couldn't do because I was female, except once I did have this wild urge to be a jet pilot. Goodness knows what I would have done if I had been. I do think that women writers in science fiction, perhaps women writers in general, have brought something into the field. I did female characters for a very long, long time when I was growing up. All my leads were heroines. Then finally it dawned on me that I wrote entire books without a male character in them. Or if there was one, the poor fellow entered the scene only when necessary and exited as quickly as possible. This was because, again speaking as an artist, I always drew females better in the early days because I had a model -- me.

When I was trying to write males I was not secure with them. I looked at the science fiction novels of the day (this was back in the 1950s and early 60s) and they were all full of males. I thought that it would be useful to write male characters so I started figuring out how to do that. I learned and, curiously enough, in the books I have out right now, I suppose the male characters predominate. Which is a phase for right now. I may switch back the other way.

As a matter of fact, the book I'm working on right now has a female lead. Men could start out from the beginning writing books with male characters and have the female run on stage and run off again when she's no longer useful, just the way I was doing with men. But they could get away with it, and go on doing it forever and forever and forever. No one seems to notice.

I have noticed that now there are male writers who are saying, "I'd like to try doing a character from the female point of view", just as so many female writers have done their books from the male viewpoint. I think that that's all a part of learning to be a craftsman, like an actor learning to play many parts.

One thing I feel sensitive about is having people say, "Look, you're a woman, you've broken into the field; you've broken the barriers". I didn't. Andre Norton, Marion Bradley, C.L. Moore, Leigh Brackett broke the barriers. They were there a long time before any of the rest of us came on the scene. I do feel that all of a sudden there is an interest in female characters in science fiction and the men are interested in doing them.

I'm kind of interested myself to see these experiments because it's like seeing yourself through other eyes. Sometimes I don't agree with what they find. Sometimes I think, well, a woman wouldn't really do that. I'm sure men reading my characters sometimes say, "That's peculiar behavior", and you learn a little.

SFR: Is there any particular reason you call yourself C.J. on your books rather than Carolyn?

CERRYH: I've never favored the name Carolyn, although I have to accept it because it's mine. My middle name is my favorite name, but no one can spell it or pronounce it properly. The spelling looks like Janice and the pronunciation is Jan-eece. I fought that battle, literally, sometimes with fists, all the way through grade school, but I gave up on it. My intimate family, and only my family, calls me by my middle name. That is the name I would prefer if I weren't so dumb sensitive about it. So I've always gone by Carolyn except when I first started out on my own. I had all my mail done with a stamp that said C.J. I figured to avoid burglars and other problems that it was easier to go by C.J. on the mailbox and similar things. That's the way my rubber stamps were. Since they were, that's the way my manuscripts were stamped. The path of least resistance. Also, I use

Also, I use long titles, and perhaps it's a bit of egotism, but if I use my full name they would have to write it smaller on book-jackets. I prefer to be visible.

SFR: When did you make the decision to give up teaching and become a full-time writer? Was it after your first sale?

CERRYH: Yes, before that I had always managed to mix the two successfully. Starvation was a good motivator as I wasn't selling anything.

I thought that when you wrote a book, you just wrote a book. You sent it in and a book happened on the stands and that was it. I didn't know that you got mail, and I didn't know that there were conventions. I never heard of fandom. You see I had my day fully planned. I got up in the morning, staggered off to school, taught a full day, came home, ate supper. Then I sat at the typewriter, wrote 'til I fell asleep, got up the next morning, taught school and on and on.

In the summer I had a little bit of bonus time. I could live almost a normal life. I did work very hard. I calculated and found that sometimes I was working an

eighteen hour day. Well, you can throw onto that the sudden realization that you've got one book out, but it doesn't necessarily make you a writer. You've got to come up with a second book.

Also here comes the correspondence. You're already working an eighteen hour day and sleep has to fit in there somewhere. I had already gotten to where I was taking my meals at the typewriter, sitting there thinking while eating a sandwich because you could hold that in your hand.

A year of that, then I was handed an extraordinarily difficult teaching assignment, five preparations, seven clubs and the department chairmanship, on top of it all. My health began to suffer from it. And here was the correspondence, and all of a sudden conventions came along.

I soon figured out that if I wanted to go on living to a ripe old age I had better make a choice. When you've worked every spare moment of your time since age ten toward a particular thing, there was only one to be made. I agonized over it a great deal. I wanted to do both very much, but my choice was made a long time ago. I miss the kids. I enjoy my subject a great deal and I miss that. There are other things about it I don't miss at all.

SFR: What about your educational background; do you find the classics best suited for the kind of writing you do? Is that what you'd choose again?

CERRYH: I would not change that. Perhaps it wouldn't work for another person, but that was what I needed. I had a very fortuitous combination of things. I took art, for the aforementioned reason, and art gave me a sense of composition.

It's strange, but there is a relationship between the visual composition of a painting and the structural composition of a book. You can learn something about composition and color and tone as it relates to words.

I also learned music and the structure there -- the same sort of thing. I had a renaissance education all the way to learning Latin, learning to fence, learning to ride. I was born in the wrong century. When I discovered Latin I discovered that the myths, the philosophy, the universe concept was what I had been looking for. I had not found it in other subjects. I was exposed to collegiate ideas through Latin while still in

high school. In English class we were writing essays on "What I Did On My Summer Vacation". In Latin class we were learning about the Trojan War and the entire past of the world.

Then in college I had the good fortune to draw a roommate who was majoring in genetics and was studying the sciences. I already had science and had an excellent training, at least as far as high school, in biological science. I had taught myself physical science by checking books out of the library and reading them. I also read astronomical texts very heavily. I remember exiting the house secretly to watch some astronomical phenomenon that was forecast and my parents pulling me in out of the backyard at three o'clock in the morning convinced I was going to catch pneumonia out there.

So I did work at that sort of thing, but I never had any formal training in the sciences except for biology. Then my roommate came along. We had a partnership, helping each other study. I taught her Latin for her anatomical courses, and I memorized all her formulae and her courses in toxicology and comparative anatomy. I also tend to try things which happen along because I think it would be interesting to know how to do that. For instance, I'm on a tour and they say, "Who wants to climb on board a camel", and I say, "I'll try it". I think that first-hand knowledge or description helps a lot. I consider everything a potential education.

SFR: To wrap it up, do you have anything special planned for the future in terms of your books or your life?

CERRYH: I enjoy very much what I'm doing. I'm about the most content person you could imagine. When you get paid for daydreaming about your favorite subject, it is probably the best of all possible worlds. I always write scared. I always write with the feeling that whatever I'm working on is going to be the most miserable failure. If I don't, I'm not trying hard enough. If I don't write constantly at the outside edge of my ability, to the point where I risk doing something I can't do, then I have the feeling that I'm goofing off.

I try to do a good story, but I also try to do something either structurally with the book or with the characters that I haven't done before. I've no desire to go on writing the same book over and over and over again. I don't know who said it first, I've heard Rog-

er Zelazny say it, "If I ever discover a definition of science fiction I shall immediately attempt to violate it". I can only define science fiction by giving a list of books.

My own definition of science fiction, I suppose, is a growing list of my own books, each pushing at the limit that I can find for myself. I feel that I owe the reader a good story. Within the limits of that story I try to explore my own feelings about the nature of the universe, the way things operate, everything from morality to probable science.



I find that science fiction to me is one of the freest fields in which to work. I consider that it is the same thing that Virgil was doing, Publius Virgilius Maro, my great literary idol. I consider that you are free in this field to do pretty much as you please. You can experiment. And the readership is intelligent and interested to try and comprehend what you're doing. They give you the benefit of the doubt and say, "There may have been a purpose in this". I'm not sure that other readerships in other areas will tend to do this.

It gives me, as a writer, a chance to try to create the same sort of thing that the epic poets were doing. I view that as sort of a continuation of the ILIAD and the ODYSSEY. It's the kind of thing that pushes at the outer frontiers of human knowledge, pushes at the limits of our understanding about the universe, asks why and tries to give an answer to it. I don't think you could ask more of literature.

SFR: Thank you, C.J. Cherryh.

HE HEARS....

"Nightfall"

By Isaac Asimov
Analog Records
Box G, 350 Madison Ave., New York
New York, 10017
\$6.95 + 55¢ postage & handling

Reviewed by Mark Mansell

ANALOG has taken a step into the growing field of spoken word science fiction. Their first (and only, so far) record is a dramatization of Isaac Asimov's classic story "Nightfall".

Having the story in dramatized form, rather than an author's reading as done by the leaders in the sf record field -- Caedmon and Alternate World, doesn't work well on a story such as "Nightfall" which relies heavily on prolonged discussions rather than sound effects and action.

The actors give an uninspired performance, sounding too nonchalant for the most part. Most of the voices sound too similar to each other -- bland middle-class Anglo-Saxons, with the exception of a few pompous caricatures. The record would have been much improved if the actors had more unique and distinguishable voices.

Dividing the story into a series of scenes, instead of several conversations as in the original version, robs the plot of much of the pacing that made the original so memorable. Scenes are bridged with readings from the "Book of Revelations", which help add to the suspense, but do little else to further the plot. Several points from the original story which gave the reader some rays of hope for the planet's future have been omitted, making the record a chronicle of a long slide to doom without any alleviating optimism.

Tacked onto the end of the record is an interview of Isaac Asimov concerning his opinions and impressions of "Nightfall". The interview is conducted by Ben Bova. Most of the information is already available as notes in his books NIGHTFALL AND OTHER STORIES AND THE EARLY ASIMOV (both from Fawcett Books), but it's still a pleasure to listen to Isaac talk about his work.

So "Nightfall" is an interesting experiment in translating classic sf to the black platter in dramatic form, but falls short of excellence. I would have preferred to hear Isaac read the story him-

self. There is also an excellent Rick Sternbach painting on the dust cover, which has nothing to do with the story, but is lovely on its own.

Analog Records has been relegated to the sidelines for the time being, despite a short-lived rumor that one of Gordon Dickson's Dorsai tales would be the next selection. The future of Analog Records is in doubt with the resignation of Ben Bova and the new emphasis on Analog Books in cooperation with Baronet Publishers, instead. Ben Bova, however, stated in SFR #27 that if a planned radio series went through and a national distributor could be found, more Analog Records might be forthcoming. Hopefully they would work out the bugs which are evident in "Nightfall".

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

THE WALTER GILLINGS TRAVEL FUND

A FIRST FANDOM PROJECT

This fund is being conducted to provide funds to bring Wally Gillings to North America in 1980 to visit his fanish friends and to attend the Worldcon. It is in celebration of his 50 years in Science Fiction. It was in 1930 that he organized The Ilford Science Literary Circle, in Ilford, England, probably one of the first of many such organizations which followed.

All contributions to this fund will be gratefully received by the Administrator, at the address given below.

This fund has been organized by a committee composed of: David A. Kyle, Lynn Hickman and John Millard

Please make all cheques or money orders payable to: John Millard and send them to me at:

18 -- '86 Broadway Avenue
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4P 1T4

DO NOT SEND CASH THROUGH THE MAILS.

For those First Fandom Members who will not be attending Iguacon, but would like to comment about the fund, they may send their comments to me at the above address or to me, in care of: The Adams Hotel, POB 1000, Phoenix, Arizona, 85001. Please mark the envelope "Hold for Arrival 30th August 1978". I will do my best to make your comments known to the assembled members at our regular meeting.

--John Millard, Administrator

THE HUMAN HOTLINE

S-F NEWS

BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT



IGUANACON REPORT

On August 28, the day before I left for Phoenix and Iguanacón I received a call from Hank Stine, newly appointed Editor at GALAXY, who asked if I would like to write a news column for GALAXY. I accepted (with a great deal of enthusiasm) and my first column will be published in January.

What follows is a few of the many things that happened at Phoenix, Arizona over the Labor Day weekend at the 36th World Science Fiction Convention, nicknamed Iguanacón. This report is of necessity brief.

The local news media had a field day covering the convention, interviewing all the people in Star Wars costumes, etc. But then complained (after a few days of patronizing coverage) when the convention security wouldn't let them into certain areas. All in all, I found the Phoenix media as execrable as the Phoenix weather. Temperatures averaged around 110 in the day and 95 at night, with around 40% humidity.

Thank goodness the convention was better than the weather. The food at the restaurants wasn't as bad as the service. And all the panels ran on time, as did the Hugo Awards ceremony.

The following reports are excerpts from the many conversations I had at Iguanacón.

Poul Anderson ruminated that due to the tax revolt, a constitutional convention might have to be called. The reason being that the real objective of measures like California's Proposition #13 is to let the federal government know of the ordinary citizens' concerns about federal spending. However, because the U.S. has no direct national initiative, and given what we know about legislators, it is unlikely to ever have one; the only way citizens can put a rein on runaway federal spending is to call a constitutional convention.

Carolyn Cherryh and I had a fascinating talk about the ancient Etruscans and the mystery they present to archeologists. There is a possibility that their language is related to the Basques' of northwestern Spain and/or to the old Celtic tongues.

I also had a fascinating conversation with Sydney Weinberg, the SF editor at Bantam. It will be featured in my interview with Sydney next issue.

Gregory Benford talked about ideas in SF, and their relative scarcity. He mentioned not enough has been used of 20th century philosophy. He mentioned that in addition to using new scientific concepts, when he writes a story, he also likes to include a new philosophy.

Donald A. Wollheim mentioned his displeasure that a few authors sign to do a book and never complete it, thus sticking the publisher for the advance. Then later these same writers scream about the lack of ethics on the part of publishers. He also gave quite a few examples to buttress his position. He said that the overwhelming majority of writers do not do this, that in actuality it is a few highly visible loudmouths.

Andrew J. Offutt said that he felt reporters and magazines should not mention how much money authors receive for books as this wouldn't be fair to authors who don't make as much, and would cause envy and hard feelings between writers. Donald A. Wollheim supported him, saying that the matter of money is a private transaction between the writer and publisher and shouldn't be made public.

Several other writers disagreed, saying that the reporting of financial matters gave them a better gauge on the market. Charles N. Brown, editor of the newsmagazine LOCUS, whose name was mentioned by Andrew J. Offutt, said that Mr. Of-

futt had been espousing this point of view for several years and that he was going to continue to pay the notion all the attention it deserved. Mr. Brown emphasized that his policy of mentioning financial matters will not change.

Ray Faraday Nelson stated that as a teetotaler he wasn't exactly enthralled with the "subtle pressures at a convention to booze it up". His position is shared by this reporter.

I would like to thank, for their kindness and support, Norman Spinrad, Gregory Benford, Spider Robinson, Jim Frenkel, Robert Silverberg and especially Terry Carr. And also thanks to everybody who cooperated with me and gave me their support; it is much appreciated.

A note: At the Hugo Awards I had the pleasure of accepting the award for Best Fan Writer for Richard E. Geis; congratulations, Dick.

I would also like to thank Jesse F. Bone and Craig Peterson for putting up with me on the way down from the Willamette Valley. And also to John Varley, who joined Jesse, Craig and myself on the way back.

GALAXY NEWS

Hank Stine, as reported earlier, has succeeded J.J. Pierce as editor of GALAXY.

In addition to my column, of which more about in Concluding Words, Richard E. Geis will be the Book Reviewer, and Bill Warren will do a movie news column. Jerry E. Pournelle has resigned as science columnist; a replacement has not been named.

Effective immediately, the word rate for GALAXY will be 1¢ per word, paid on acceptance. Hank hopes this lower rate (but fast payment) will enable backlog of mon-

ies owed to authors to be repaid.
And after that is accomplished,
then the word rates can be raised.

Hank also is putting together
a stable of artists which ought to
rectify the problems in that area.

Some of the names to look for
in GALAXY after the start of the
year include A.E. Van Vogt, Norman
Spinrad, Frederik Pohl and a lot of
fascinating newer authors.

Next issue I hope to have the
contents of the next few issues of
GALAXY, in addition to some other
announcements and hopefully an in-
terview with Hank Stine.

Ben Bova is now the fiction ed-
itor of OMNI. After resigning
from ANALOG, he planned to go into
fulltime writing. However, Bob
Guccione, publisher of PENTHOUSE,
PENTHOUSE FORUM, VIVA and now OMNI,
made Bova an offer he couldn't re-
fuse.

Bova says Guccione feels that
there is a large market for a sci-
ence/science-fiction magazine. It
should take a few issues before we
can see some of Mr. Bova's purchas-
es. The fiction used in the first
few issues was material purchased
by Bova's predecessors.

One million copies were print-
ed of the first issue. From my
own observations it is reaching the
huge non-SF magazine-reading au-
dience it must to survive. A multi-
million-dollar advertising campaign
has been running with very effective
ads.

Stanley Schmidt is the new ed-
itor of GALAXY. I had a very nice
conversation with him at the con-
vention. He moved to New York dur-
ing the first part of September.
He was formerly a teacher in Ohio.
I hope to have some comments from
him in an upcoming issue.

Roger "SF is an ungodly field,
filled with drug addicts and reb-
els" Elwood, is doing in the relig-
ious field, what he did in SF: Muck
ing up. He is now reportedly at
odds with Peterson Publications,
publishers of INSPIRATIONS, which
Roger edits.

Randall Garrett will have a
novel, TAKEOFF, out from Starblaze
in January.

Robert Asprin will have two
books out in January -- MYTHECON-
CEPTION, from Starblaze, a sequel
to ANOTHER FINE MYTH, also from
Starblaze. St. Martin's will pub-
lish THE BUG WARS, another novel.

Katherine MacLean, Lee Harding
and Robert Silverberg will also be
published by Starblaze early next
year.

David Gerrold is doing a tril-
ogy for Quantum, entitled THE WAR
AGAINST THE TOR.

ACE NEWS

December

Jack Vance THE ASUTRA
Fred Saberhagen...BROTHER ASSASSIN
E.R. Burroughs.....THE CAVE GIRL
E.R. Burroughs...THE ETERNAL SAVAGE
Robert Sheckley...CITIZEN IN SPACE
William TuningTORNADO ALLEY
(Revised and Expanded)
Ian Watson MIRACLE VISITORS
Joseph Green STAR PROBE
G.C. Edmondson...THE SHIP THAT SAIL-
ED THE TIME STREAM
(Revised)

January

James Baen (Editor)...DESTINIES #2
(Moved from Dec. to Jan.)
E.R. Burroughs...THE LOST CONTINENT
E.R. Burroughs...BEYOND THE FARTHEST
STAR
Randall Garrett...MURDER AND MAGIC
(The First of Lord Darcy series)
Gordon R. Dickson.SPACIAL DELIVERY
Robert Sheckley...THE TENTH VICTIM
Bob ShawTHE TWO-TIMERS

SPECIAL PROMOTION FOR ANALOG BOOKS

Ben BovaTHE ANALOG YEARBOOK
Anthony Lewis THE BEST OF
ASTOUNDING
Orson Scott Card .. CAPITOL: THE
WORTHING CHRONICLE
(A Collection of Shorts)
Sam Nicholson .. CAPTAIN EMPIRICAL
(A Connected Collection)
Ben BovaMAXWELL'S DEMONS
Stephen Robinett PROJECTIONS

BANTAM NEWS

December

Robert E. Howard...KANE: THE SKULLS
IN THE STARS
Frederik Brown ROGUE IN SPACE

January

Gordon R. Dickson TIME STORM
Stephen Goldin TREK TO MADWORLD
(A Star Trek Book, with an introduc-
tion by David Gerrold wherein he re-
veals the truth about Stephen Gold-
in and his connection to were-Koalas)

John Crowley has sold a fan-
tasy, ENGINE SUMMER, to Bantam.

Bantam will also be bringing
out CONAN THE LIBERATOR, written by
L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter.

BERKLEY NEWS

December

Frank HerbertDESTINATION: VOID
(Revised)
Harry Harrison...MAKE ROOM, MAKE ROOM
Gardner Dozois STRANGERS
Robert Silverberg UNFAMILIAR
TERRITORY

January

Robert Thurston .. BATTLE STAR: GAL-
ACTICA VOL. 2
(No Title as yet Determined)
Poul Anderson THE ENEMY STARS
James Tiptree, Jr... UP THE WALLS OF
THE WORLD
(Author's real name Alice Sheldon)
Richard Matheson...THE SHRINKING MAN
Robert OnopaTHE PLEASURE TUBE

DAW NEWS

December

A.E. Van VogtPENDULUM
Alan Burt AkersGOLDEN SCORPIO
(Drey Prescott Series #18)
Lin Carter (Editor)...THE YEAR'S BEST
FANTASY VOL. 4
E.C. TubbTHE QUILLIAM SECTOR
(Dumarest of Terra Series #19)
Donald A. Wollheim (Editor)...WOLL-
HEIM'S WORLDS' BEST SF: VOL. 2

January

Marion Zimmer Bradley and
Paul Edwin Zimmer THE SURVIVORS
(Paul Edwin Zimmer is Ms. Brad-
ley's brother, the first brother-
sister writing duo in sf.)
Michael Moorcock...CITY OF THE BEAST
Brian M. Stableford.BALANCE OF POWER
Hugh Walker ARMY OF DARKNESS
(The first of a series. The
second, MESSENGER OF DARKNESS,
will be published by Daw in
March.)

Gordon R. DicksonDORSAL!

DELL NEWS

December

Joan D. Vinge FIREFISH
(Consists of the title novella
and, MOTHER AND CHILD, another
novella. It is not a Binary

Theodore Sturgeon THE DREAMING
JEWELS

January

Cristopher Priest..THE PERFECT LOVER
Bob Shaw COSMIC KALEIDOSCOPE
(A collection of short stories)

DEL REY NEWS

Bob Stricklegold and
Mark NobleGLORYHITS
(The flagship of the Del Rey
hardcover line.)
KillianTHE EMPIRE OF TIME
Alan Dean FosterICERIGGER
Cordwainer Smith..QUEST OF THE THREE
WORLDS
John BrunnerSQUARES OF THE CITY
Evangeline Walton ...THE CHILDREN OF
LLYR

January

Stephen R. Donaldson .. THE ILLEARTH
WAR

(The first book of the Chron-
icles of Covenant, LORD FOUL'S
BANE, has made it as far as
4th on several nationwide best-
seller polls. A remarkable
feat for an author's first
work. THE ILLEARTH WAR is the
second of the trilogy; the fi-
nal book of the trilogy, THE
POWER THAT PRESERVES, will be
out in paperback in March.)

Dave BishoffNIGHT WORLD
Lee Killough....A VOICE OUT OF RAMAH
John Brunner DOUBLE, DOUBLE
Weinbaum THE BEST OF STANLEY G.
WEINBAUM
Evangeline WaltonTHE SONG OF
RHIANON

December

August Derleth...SOMEONE IN THE DARK
Norman Spinrad.....THE IRON DREAM

January

Carl JacobiREVELATIONS IN BLACK
Leo Margulies.....WEIRD TALES

SPOTLIGHT: FEATURED AUTHORS NORMAN SPINRAD & KATHLEEN SKY

Norman Spinrad

His new novel, A WORLD BETWEEN,
will be published by Jove/HBJ in
April. Parts of the book will ap-
pear in GALAXY.

Jove will be reissuing THE
IRON DREAM in December and BUG JACK
BARRON later next year.

Ace will publish THE STAR
SPANGLED FUTURE next spring.

And in Oct. of '79 Jove will
publish another novel, THE MIND GAME.

Kathleen Sky

Her new Star Trek novel, VULCAN
has reached #12 on the B. Dalton
bestseller list. The first Star
Trek book to do so.

She has sold a second Star Trek
novel to Bantam.

Bantam has also purchased a
fantasy trilogy, The Witchdame Se-
ries.

Bantam has purchased another
novel, as yet untitled.

Kathleen also had a rather un-
pleasant encounter with a pick-pock-
et at the Worldcon. Some money was
stolen, in addition to a valuable
antique handkerchief which was a
family heirloom. Kathleen reports
that it was done so smoothly she
wasn't aware of the theft until she
sat down several minutes later.
The convention center security po-
lice said the area is frequented by
professional pickpockets.

On the brighter side, Kathleen
and her husband, Steve Goldin, will
be teaching a spring semester ex-
tension course at Cal State-North-
ridge with the emphasis on selling
sf.

Back in the spring of 1973 I
read my first sf magazine (it was
given to me by a schoolmate whose
father worked in the local news ag-
ency, and took home copies of the
old magazines for his kids). It
was the January 1973 issue of GAL-
AXY. If anybody had told me then
that within six years I'd be on the
staff I know I would not have be-
lieved them. At the age of 22, I
know for sure I am the youngest
professional columnist in the sf
field.

As for my column in GALAXY --
it originally was going to be only
350 words. However, Hank decided
to up it to 750. It will be a month-
ly column. All of us (Hank, REG,
and myself) agree that it won't af-
fect the continuation of my column
in SFR in any way. The audience
overlap isn't significant. It will
be different from "The Human Hot-
line" and geared to a less sophis-
ticated and less knowledgeable au-
dience. The name of the column will
be "The SF Newsletter".

Here is the new GALAXY editor-
ial address:

Hank Stine
585 Caddo St.
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

And my address for those who missed
it in SFR #23:

Elton T. Elliott
1899 Wiessner Dr. N.E.
Salem, OR 97303



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THE VIVISECTOR

A Column By Darrell Schweitzer

IMMORTAL

Edited by Jack Dann

Introduction by R.C.W. Ettinger
Harper & Row, 1978, 226 pp., \$9.95

Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer

I try to write favorable reviews. I really do. I don't want to waste my time reading things I don't enjoy, so I always pick from the vast amounts of incoming review copies those books which I think will be of genuine interest. When *IMMORTALS* came in, I called dibs on it with Dick. I definitely wanted to do this one.

Wow, a major work by Thomas Disch, "Chanson Perpetuelle", an excerpt from a forthcoming novel. I've always considered Disch's *CAMP CONCENTRATION* to be one of the great works of science fiction. The stories in *FUN WITH YOUR NEW HEAD* are exemplary. 334 bogs down, but has some very fine moments.

And now this thing. I regret to say, it doesn't look like it's going to be a very interesting novel -- 54 pages of lifeless glop, without intellect or passion. After 54 pages one is still waiting for the story to start -- and by "story" I don't mean bang-bang action. I mean some thematic development, some character change, introduction of stimulating ideas, something. Where *CAMP CONCENTRATION* was intensely rich in all departments, "Chanson Perpetuelle" is utterly empty. It is allegedly about a sub-culture of mortals in a society of mortals two centuries hence, but without the brief note at the front you never know it. Disch makes no attempt to even touch on his theme, and his characters just wander around aimlessly. What little of the background we get is totally unbelievable. England in 2098 is apparently just like England in the present, or even thirty years ago. At one point the characters even go to a Wimpy's, which is sort of a British MacDonalds. How much to you want to bet that venerable institution is no longer around in the stated year? Or you might try to imagine a novel about 1978 written by an utterly myopic author of 1778: In the morning the wealthy

hero calls his servants to help him on with his satin breeches, silk stockings, powdered wig, three-cornered hat, etc., after which he is driven in his six-horse carriage down to the docks where spice ships have just brought in a new shipment from the Indies. The blasted tubs, three-masted and sail-powered of course, took a full six months for the return trip...

Disch's future is about as believable. He simply isn't thinking.

Or perhaps he is writing a story for "bright children and a certain type of retarded adult". Disch has been making a complete fool of himself lately in *THE LITTLE MAGAZINE* and *SCIENCE FICTION AT LARGE* (Ed. Peter Nichols, Harper & Row) by showing himself amazingly unaware of the nature of his field and his audience. Disch's contention is that SF is a form of children's literature, but then he goes on to demonstrate that he doesn't understand children's literature either, because he doesn't know a good juvenile is supposed to deal with growing up and approaching inevitable adult realities. The audience, in his view, is made up of lower-middle-class laborer types, almost completely illiterate, to whom SF authors must pander. Well, I certainly wouldn't want him in my marketing department if he doesn't know that SF sales are heaviest in affluent suburbs and college towns, or

that the average reader is in his late twenties and college educated. Imagine placing *THE DISPOSSESSED*, *NOVA*, *THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH*, *THE SPACE MERCHANTS*, etc. in a truckstop instead of the usual college, shopping district urban, and suburban bookstores.

One is tempted to suggest some very nasty logic:

A) The average science fiction reader is a bright child or a retarded adult.

B) Thomas Disch writes science fiction.

C) Therefore, the works of Thomas Disch are written for and read by...

His career, if this goes on, will take a definite direction: down and out, as his readership declines and he reaches a point where his books can no longer be published. He may vanish entirely into the infinitesimally smaller world of the little literary magazines, and people will wonder whatever happened to the guy who wrote *CAMP CONCENTRATION*. If I had been Disch's agent, with a stake in his career, and "Chanson Perpetuelle" had come in, I would have sent it back with a very well-meant piece of advice: "Tom, burn this".

Fortunately the whole book isn't as bad. We rapidly go from a declining Thomas Disch to Gene Wolfe, who keeps getting better and better. "The Doctor of Death Island" (not to be confused with other titles!) reminds me of some of the great work Robert Silverberg did in the late 60s and early 70s. Wolfe has taken a familiar idea, one often found even in comic books -- the immortal sentenced to life imprisonment -- and done a superlative treatment of it, very possibly the definitive one. The story is simply about a convict who is put in suspended animation until his cancer can be cured, then revived in

THAT COPPERHEADED
VARMIT SCHWEITZER
DONE REVIEWED ONE
BOOK TOO MANY!



the future, when the human race has become immortal. What follows is a sensitive study in alienation. The prisoner is more and more isolated from the frightening world around him. Wolfe pulls the story off by careful attention to character and feeling -- we know what it is like to go through such a feeling. He also somewhat mars his ending with ambiguity.

The character is murdered at the end (as I read the murky last paragraph), leaving a vast number of unanswered questions, and what I'd call a motivational rabbit out of a hat. The rest of the story does not build up to this. Otherwise the writing is very good, without the verbal imprecision and static quality which damages much of his work. People ask why there has never been a Gene Wolfe collection. Answer: not that many of his stories are that good. But he's getting a lot better, and soon they will be.

Pamela Sargent's "The Renewal" is an honest effort, which falls short of its mark, I think, because the author just isn't as skilled as she should be. God knows she's trying. She's taken another familiar idea -- the colony of artificially created, genetically superior children growing up in a frightened, hostile world -- and done the best to make it come alive. In most stories of this type the super-children are the only interest, the normal adults are at best foils for their personalities to bounce off. Sargent tries to make hers fully developed characters, but somehow for all their reported feelings, their passions and love affairs, it doesn't quite work. There's a certain lack of sensitivity. I'm left feeling Kate Wilhelm could have done better with the same material, or Joanna Russ in her pre-polemic days. The children are interesting, and there is a good deal of consideration of how such beings (without many normal emotions) would think and behave, but the normal adults are pretty much cardboard. The result is a good story, a publishable one, which should have been a great one but isn't.

Then we descend back into the pits. I tried my best to read George Zebrowski's "Transfigured Night", but gave up after three tries. I found I kept falling asleep, or my attention would stray, and when I got back to it I could not remember what I had read. No characterization, but worse than that Zebrowski seems to be trying desperately to write pretty, to be arty, and the result is like swimming in molasses. He uses a dozen vague words where one clear one will do. There are dozens of text-

book cases of how not to describe, how not to construct a sentence or paragraph. The prose is well below his usual level, and the story is virtually opaque. There is also a scene in which somebody rushes into an apartment and chops somebody's head off, witnessed by the protagonist. It's the most lifeless, emotionless piece of action I've ever encountered in a published story. I'm interested to note that the only other review of IMMORTALS I've seen (Doug Fratz in THRUST) agreed with me on this point "Transfigured Night" is as much a total failure as any piece of fiction can be.

Basically, this book is below average for Jack Dann, from whom I have been led to expect better. Only one first-rate story and two losers. You can skip it, if the Wolfe item is reprinted.

LOCUS
1-103, 104-207 (two vol.)
Gregg Press, 1978, \$95.00

My Gawd, I never expected to get something like this for review, and I hope the mailman didn't get a hernia delivering it. Must weigh 30 pounds. I don't imagine many individuals are going to buy this, but libraries collecting science fiction should. Lots of history in these pages. Right now it's interesting to page through, and in twenty years or so it'll no doubt be fascinating. By the way, publishers intending to do facsimile reprints can learn a few things from the Gregg experience. The photographic technique used is not adequate for anything less than offset or the very best mimeo. Where the Browns' printing expertise slips (especially in the earliest issues) the print gets pretty fuzzy. The Gregg Press EXTRAPOLATION (Issues 1-10, 1959, 1969, \$35) is that way all the way through.

COLD FEAR
Edited by Hugh Lamb
Tatling, 1978, 175 pp., \$8.95

This is an odd book in some respects. Its stated intent is "to scare the living daylight out of you", yet after reading it I remain unperturbed. Maybe I'm getting jaded, but most horror stories do not affect me very much. (The only one

FOR THE BEST "I'M LEAVING SCIENCE FICTION FOREVER" SPEECH, NOMINEES ARE: HARLAN ELLISON, BARRY MALZBERG, ROBERT SILVERBERG AND ROGER ELWOOD...



BECAUSE OF LAST-MINUTE DISQUALIFICATIONS, ONLY HARLAN ELLISON AND ROGER ELWOOD REMAIN. THE WINNER IS....

in recent months which has is Michael Bishop's grotesque "Within the Walls of Tyre" in WEIRDBOOK 13, which I recommend, fiendishly, with malice aforethought, to the squeamish.) However, the editor's remarks do raise eyebrows (I have three.), leaving the impression that either I know considerably less about this field than I think I do, or there is practically a whole other genre of macabre fiction being published in England, completely isolated from this country. Lamb tells us that Rosemary Timperley has published forty novels, and her ghost stories have been appearing in "the best anthologies" for twenty years. I've never heard of her. Charles Birkin has been active since the 1930s, with several collections published. Who? John Blackburn has published twenty novels, three of which "rank as among the finest horror fiction in the English language". Huh? And so on. There apparently is a larger market for this sort of thing in England (COLD FEAR was published there first.), and we have to consider that Robert Aickman was unknown in the United States for many years after he became established, but... Lamb goes on to insist that Arthur Porges is a major macabre writer, and I begin to suspect he's prone to exaggeration.

The stories are mostly very readable, but slight. Only a short piece by Brian Lumley is outrageous bad. Many of the rest are even well written. "An Emissary for the Devil" by Robert Haining, "The House in the Forest" by Frederick Cowles, and "The Papal Musician" by Ken Alden all evoke historical eras (Vic-

torian London, pre-World War I Vienna, and medieval Rome) and handle detail very well, but have almost trivial plots. The Cowles, for example, is about a boy who wanders into a house where he meets a mysterious lady, then on a return visit it is threatened by a vile dwarf, only to be rescued by the lady. Of course he learns as an adult that the place had burned down well before he was born, and of course the two are ghosts connected with a ghastly crime there. The Haining story depends too heavily on Tarot to be fully understood by someone who doesn't know the cards, but it's easy enough to see that the supernatural manifestation was caused by the Mysterious Gentleman who Delves into the Black Arts, and it is just as easy to see that his death was caused by delving too far. It always happens that way in these stories. Rosemary Timperley's "The Darkhouse Keeper" is about somebody who murders the guy who cuckolded him, and the only surprise is that the supernatural revenge comes almost at once, with no rationale for what is happening. (Usually they get him through a magic amulet, uttered curse, or craftily-laid ectoplasmic boobytrap.) Adrian Cole's "The Demon in the Stone" follows a straight line from stated premise to the (almost required, it seems) demise of people involved, but at least has a descriptive power well beyond the ordinary. This one has no surprises, except in a few details (how the Thing gets them), but it'll certainly hold your interest.

Some of the better stories strive for originality. Ramsey Campbell makes it twice, with "In the Bag" and "After the Queen". The former is by far the more successful, a frightful little thing about an unlikely subject -- plastic bags. Campbell usually writes about very ordinary things. He did a story for WHISPERS once about someone haunted by cigarette smoke. "After the Queen" is about reality doing a flip-flop in a movie theater, but it's very vague on exactly what is going on and why. Porges' "The Man Who Wouldn't Eat" is more gruesome than frightening, but at least, as a story set in Haiti and dealing with voodoo, it doesn't fall into the usual clichés. This time they do beat the witchdoctor's curse -- but was it worth it? Robert Aickman's "Laura" is about a mysterious lady a man meets several times in his life. She is certainly from Beyond, and she probably is an emissary of Death, but at least Aickman doesn't become heavy handed. There are times when you do explain everything, or almost everything (i.e. when the explanation is interest-

ing, and heights the story), and times when it's better not to, and let the mood carry. Maybe it's because Aickman knows what he's doing that he's known outside of his own country and most of these other writers are not. (I'd expect you to recognize Campbell, Aickman, Lumley, Porges, and Cole. David Sutton also present with an Egyptian curse tale, is the editor of FANTASY TALES, but I've never seen his fiction before.)

TALES FROM GAVAGAN'S BAR
By L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt
Owlswick Press, 1978, 310 pp. \$13.00

A completely satisfactory edition of a work first published in 1953. This version contains five uncollected tales and one previously unpublished one, in addition to those in the original collection. The original artwork (by Pratt's wife) is faithfully reproduced, and there's a new color jacket by Tim Kirk. And it's a splendid job of book-making: a real book, with cloth binding, sewn signatures, heavy boards and acid-free paper, rather than a bunch of cheapo pages thrown loosely in the general direction of a plastic and cardboard back in the manner of many trade publishers these days.

The stories are barroom pieces in the venerable tradition, derived of course, from Dunsany's Jorkens, of the sort made more familiar these days by Spider Robinson, and (before him) Arthur Clarke in TALES FROM THE WHITE HART. I don't think they're as good as Dunsany, who has never been bested at this sort of thing, and compared to de Camp, or de Camp and Pratt, they're a bit below the top drawer also. The same sort of wit and invention we see in the Harold Shea series is present, but greatly toned down. De Camp did some better work along similar lines solo for UNKNOWN and ASTOUNDING a decade or so earlier. All are capably written, but at times I find them slight and anecdotal. Often they end just as they begin to look interesting. Someone tells of a situation they got into, and the denouement is usually a confirmation they're telling the truth (e.g. dime-sized tracks across the counter top, when the guy is talking about sparrow-sized flying elephants), instead of a resolution of the problem. Somebody goes back a hundred years and finds himself out of place, and broke since his money is no good, but the stated theme,

that life is harder than you'd think without modern conveniences, isn't explored in any depth. Pleasant as is, but I wish the authors had taken more time on these things.

EXTRAPOLATION, AN SF NEWSLETTER
Vols. 1-10, 1959-69
Edited by Thomas Clareson
Gregg, 1978, \$35.00

Another reprint of an academic SF journal. The print is sometimes splochy when the original mimeo was. I found the content a lot more interesting than I expected. Delany's oft-reprinted speech/article on style. An extensive Lovecraft bibliography. Lots of information on pre-Gernsbackian SF, an area which needs scholarly delving and rediscovery. An early article about Clarion by Robin Wilson. A panel discussion with Asimov, Pohl and Darko Suvin. A historically interesting article on SF by Judith Merrill. (Historical in that it shows what she was thinking back when she was an important figure.)

BIG PLANET
By Jack Vance
Ace Books, 1978, 217 pp, \$1.75
Reviewed by L. Craig Rickman

Recently Ace Books has re-released the book that started Jack Vance on the often-long road to success. That book is BIG PLANET.

BIG PLANET's plot is simple: Man against the toughest, meanest, most bloodthirsty planet Man (or Jack Vance) could make for himself. That is the book. Characterization is better-than-adequate (especially for 1952), but they take a back seat. Vance's planet is the star. With a crazy emperor who wants to rule a crazy planet, a (minor) love affair, a dozen humorous, often unfriendly civilizations, traitors on every hand (for suspense) -- it is a pretty big star. It's like strolling through a menagerie.

I liked BIG PLANET because Vance's strange beasts, people and cultures held my attention unflaggingly. I like to see the hero win in the end -- and so does Jack Vance. I loved this book; I don't see how anyone with red blood couldn't. Not without flaws, totally without boredom.

ANTI-REVIEW OF
NEAL WILGUS'S REVIEW OF
STEPHEN R. DONALDSON'S
LORD FOUL'S BANE

Reviewed by Orson Scott Card

I can't quarrel with a reviewer's opinion that a book is not something to rave about -- raving is a very personal thing, and in fact when I was through with the Thomas Covenant trilogy I didn't feel like raving, either. I just bought three of the cheap editions from the book club and started passing them out to every literate person I knew, because if ever a fantasy deserves to be read, this one does.

Wilgus should have read all three books, which, while they stand alone, work together into a coherent whole that makes the trilogy a masterpiece: Both the frame story of Thomas Covenant, Leper, and the fantasy story of Thomas Covenant, reluctant hero, become counterpoint that makes the three movements a brilliant concerto. The trilogy's trappings of fantasy borrow elements from all the sources of fantasy: the mythmakers, other fantasists, and the author's imagination. But Donaldson goes farther. He is an excellent writer, and contrary to Wilgus's opinion I found dozens of fulfilled and developed characters in the three volumes. Themes were introduced, then repeated with variations. The emotions evoked were not the cheap ones -- sadness and shock and romance. Donaldson was playing with the fires that burn hottest and deepest, and instead of liking Covenant I found myself loving him; instead of pitying the losers I found myself wavering between despair and hatred. Donaldson's evil isn't mindless and relentless; it's whimsical and insidious and likely to pop up in your own grand-mother.

In short, Donaldson isn't merely a fantasist, he is a brilliant novelist. He can be measured against the best in the world of fiction, and while he makes some mistakes of the beginner (as we all do) they are far outweighed by the magnitude of the achievement. This is not another rehash of Tolkien; not a book aimed at "young adults". Donaldson has created a world more real than reality, and the pain and joy and terror and love I felt while reading it remain in my memory, not as fiction, but as experience.

WHO GOES HERE?

By Bob Shaw
Ace, 1978, \$1.75

Reviewed by Bill Glass

Packaged to look a hell of a lot more serious than it is, WHO GOES HERE? is a fast-reading, extremely funny and ultimately satisfying send up of Good Old-Time SF.

Warren Peace (yes!) finds himself having enlisted in the Space Legion and is somewhat surprised that he has done so. For one joins the Legion to forget, a desire the Legion immediately gratifies with selective memory erasure. Only poor, befuddled Warren has forgotten not just whatever dark deed urged him to put pen to paper, but everything. ("You must have been a monster", everyone keeps telling him.)

What he was, is, and becomes is the frame on which the book is strung. And in the stringing sharp satiric needles are stuck into military sf, satires of military sf, nicotine addicts, godlike superhuman police entities, snooty head waiters, consumeristic imperialism, mad scientists, their beautiful daughters, and recomplimented time loops.

This one is a romp!

Enjoy! Enjoy! Enjoy!

PURSUIT OF THE SCREAMER

By Ansen Dibell
Daw Books, 270 pp., \$1.95
Cover art by Gino D'Achille

Reviewed by Paul McGuire III

Don Wollheim has the habit of comparing women writers only to other women writers, particularly Norton, Bradley and lately also Tanith Lee. Since he has done so with this book, I wonder if Ansen Dibell is male or female. A small point to a reader. The important thing is that (s)he is a very good writer

AT LEAST PARANOIDS
ARE NEVER ALONE.



and PURSUIT OF THE SCREAMER is an excellent first novel.

Several thousand years before the novel begins, the world was settled from space. The immortal Tek rules, but they in turn were ruled by an organic computer at the bottom of the sea, the Shai. The Tek developed other races as vassals. Eventually the lower classes rebelled. The Tek built a death wall around their realm, The High Plains. By the novel's start, the Tek are few in number and most of them are mad. The killing wall is also down in one place, a fact very few know.

The novel tells the story of four people, and is seen through their perceptions and mentalities as their lives intertwine. Each is from a different major group.

Jannus is from one of the many land societies. It is this young man who first helps the Screamer, and sets in motion a catastrophic chain of events. His prime motivation is a hopeless love for Poli.

Poli is one of the telepathic women warriors of the Valde who hire out as lie detectors and sentinels to the cities in order to earn their bride price. (Valde men are in very short supply.) After her troop finishes their term of contract, Poli travels the long way home with them, but before long becomes linked with Jannus's schemes.

Elda is clan leader of a group of families making another long journey by barge caravan to the Valde summerfair for their homecoming. He was drawn into Jannus's plot to assist the Screamer by his lust for the fabled tools beyond the wall.

the Screamer, a Tek, who wishes to kill the Shai and restore true death to his kind, but Lur is on the wrong side of the wall. (Tek immortality is obtained by machines called redes. A redecap records all of a Tek's mentality, and when they die it is transferred to a new body.) The "screaming" comes from a Tek's mental anguish whenever they are indoors. Just as a Tek cannot abide any kind of roof overhead, a Valde cannot stand the mental panic of a Tek. When his child's body is inadequate, Lur switches to the body of a saber-tooth tiger, without losing the power of speech.

Like in Burroughs, the characters' adventures constantly criss-cross in every conceivable combination, but not entirely due to coincidence. Jannus is drawn ever deeper into Tek intrigue, and even has to undergo having a rede made which will force him into Tek existence after death. Before long everyone is trying to kill him, use him, or just get rid of him -- but the kid has spunk!

Despite a good deal of action, the novel stresses character. The world is revealed on a need-to-know basis, but is done skillfully. For instance, the system of obligation all intelligent beings abide by is important, yet it is revealed through character interaction rather than by lecture. Dibell works it so that the novel is quite complex without being confusing. An ambitious project smoothly and professionally set forth, although a bit long.

AN EXERCISE FOR MADMEN

By Barbara Paul
Berkley Books, 168 pp., \$1.50

Reviewed by Paul McGuire III

Pythia is a domed science colony out in space functioning as smoothly as an antihill. In it are scientists, technicians, a cyborg computer, thinking chimpanzees, experimentally altered humans, and one non-essential test tube person left over from a departed experimental group all surnamed Geiss.

The opening section accomplishes at least three things simultaneously:

- (1) It shows us the science center under normal operation,
- (2) it introduces characters, implanting some basic characterization for each, different enough so that we can keep them straight later on, and

(3) it creates contrast for upcoming events. This is all done in a series of short scenes.

* * *

Transition seems to be a lost art in writing. It has been replaced by the blank space. In a motion picture, the illusion of motion is created by having a blank space between each picture which forces the mind in that split-second to fill in the non-existent movement. Without that blank space, the film would look choppy. Is this worth pursuing as analogy? (One section of the novel actually is a screenplay.)

A ghost-like quality, conversations occurring in limbo, objects with detail but no form -- yet, somehow it works.

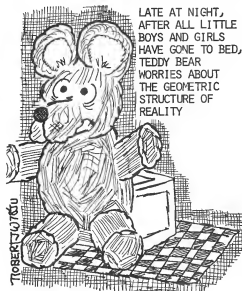
* * *

A tall golden alien who is the perfection of physical beauty, lands. He evades answering questions, plants trees with miraculous fruit, and turns the whole social order upside down. Well, to be more precise, he eliminates the social order. Soon everyone is just lying around having fun.

Take a bite of the fruit and return to paradise. But is there a catch to it? Are there nasty undertones to the music of the sex orgy? Oh, sure they gang bang the old woman prophet of doom, but, it was for her own good.

Man gained the knowledge of good and evil, but have they accepted the responsibility? Can we?

The book can be read in two hours. This is the first novel I've noticed from Barbara Paul, but I will be looking for her by-line again



EMPTY WORLD

By John Christopher
New York, Dutton, 1978, 134 pp.
\$7.50 Order from: E.P. Dutton,
201 Park Ave. So., NYC 10003.
ISBN: 0-525-29250-0

Reviewed by Fred Patten

Christopher seems to be going out for the title of Dean of the World-Destroyers. There's NO BLADE OF GRASS, in which all grain crops fail and civilization starves; THE LONG WINTER, in which a new Ice Age crushes society; THE RAGGED EDGE, in which super-earthquakes practically shake the planet apart; THE WHITE MOUNTAINS and its sequels, in which Wells-like aliens conquer mankind...

But Christopher usually leaves a modicum of humanity alive to begin rebuilding. EMPTY WORLD is his bleakest novel yet. This disaster is a disease that causes the body's cells to age rapidly. The result is a sort of instant senility in which people suddenly grow dry and wrinkled and die of old age within days.

The story is related through the eyes of Neil, a teen-ager in a small English town. The Plague begins as a heard-in-passing TV news report of a mysterious new disease in India. Within months it has spread throughout the globe. A state of emergency and national quarantine is declared in England, but this proves useless. Soon Neil is watching in horror as his family, neighbors, and friends of all ages become wizened and feeble and collapse in the streets.

Before the novel is halfway through, Neil is apparently the only person left on Earth. The remainder of the book describes his adjustment to the situation and his lonely journey through England looking for other survivors. He does eventually encounter three, all young like himself -- but two of them are obviously psychotic.

Christopher has a habit of writing novels about young protagonists in trilogies, so EMPTY WORLD may have two sequels coming. It certainly ends with many questions unanswered, such as the implication that immunity may be associated with a person's mental/emotional condition -- and what this suggests about Neil. A plot in which the world is inherited by two Adam/Eve pairs, one homicidal, is not one which has been overused.

EMPTY WORLD is extremely well-written. It is also extremely depressing, and it ends at a frustratingly unresolved point. Wait and see if there are any sequels.

BEASTS

By John Crowley
Bantam Books for June, 1978
211 pp., \$1.75

Reviewed by David A. Truesdale

This is a curious book, an enigmatic book, a book I feel contained all the elements of a truly good book, but somehow most certainly failed. At bottom line it tries to deal with the persecution and alienation of half-animal mutants called the leos in a future time when a corrupt government unlike -- in terms of structure and name -- ours of today attempts to rule a society that has warred with itself and is in a fragmented and relatively anarchistic state.

Through advances in modern genetic engineering we have developed the ability to create a half-human, half-leonine species of "human" which is capable of interbreeding with homo sapiens. They are few, and are castigated by the common people as well as the Union for Social Engineering. They live in small groups in widely scattered "reservations", and have an extremely difficult time just getting enough food for their stomachs and clothing for their backs. They are very close to total extinction.

Crowley sets his stage adequately enough, for near the close of the book our sympathies must of necessity be with the starving, misunderstood, maligned and murdered leos -- but then the book ends with the half-fox mutant Reynard reappearing miraculously (he has had the foresight to clone himself), and plotting with a group of underground leo sympathizers, their aim to begin a 'new age' of life and understanding for all Beasts everywhere, the final hope given us in the final line of the book. All that is well and good. But...

... Henry Kuttner did all this for us years ago, and in so much more successful fashion, with his perceptive, sensitive, touching tales of the Baldies, those telepathic mutants who were also outcast and feared for their dangerous difference from mankind as a whole. Kuttner knew what he wanted to say of alienation and living amongst those who would hate and kill if you let your difference be indiscriminately exposed, and he said it. He got right to the point and showed us, made us feel what it is like to be a second-class citizen because one is better. He didn't take up nearly an entire novel with average characterization, average intrigue and by-play before getting down to the nub of things, and herein lies the major fault with BEASTS. It is

a very shallow imitation of Kuttner's Baldies -- in concept -- and just managed to end somewhere close to where Kuttner started.

If I were you I'd pass this one by.

THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES, SERIES VI

Edited by Gerald W. Page
Daw Books, #297 (UE1387)
July, 1978, 239 pp., \$1.95

Reviewed by David A. Truesdale

I don't read much horror or horror fantasy any more because they stopped doing anything for me some years back. The writers of the short horror story seemed unimaginative or unoriginal, or at best unskilled at their craft. These days it would seem that to be effective in this difficult sub-genre the wri-



ter must try very hard to be original, be really frightening, and possess enough writing skill to pull it off.

With this in mind, I am pleased to say that this is an honestly good collection of mostly very short weird or horror stories, with absolutely no clinkers in sight. Oh, there are some traditional offerings written in a traditional manner, but at least they are written well enough to work.

At least three of the fourteen stories I would place in the "excellent" category. Stephen King's "Children of the Corn", "Within the Walls of Tyre" by Michael Bishop, and the 1977 winner of the World Fantasy Award for Best Short Fiction, Russell Kirk's "There's a Long, Long Trail A-Winding", are all somewhat longer than the rest, are all executed and written with a high degree of expertise, and truly move the reader to real emotions of out-

right fear, psychological horror, or finally tears, respectively. And it is this last story, the one by Russell Kirk, that I single out as one of the most deeply touching and honestly moving fantasy-horror stories that I have ever read. And it's not even listed on the contents page or counted in as one of the fourteen stories in this supposedly thirteen story collection. But that's a minor publishing oversight.

Some of the other notable contributions, mostly original publications although several are gleaned from WHISPERS and WEIRDOBOOK, are "At the Bottom of the Garden" by David Compton, "Undertow" by Karl Edward Wagner, "Winter White" by the remarkable Tanith Lee, William Home Scott's delightfully chilling "A Cobweb of Pulsing Veins", and a pair of short shockers by Charles L. Grant and Ramsey Campbell, respectively: "If Damon Comes" and "Drawing in". But all fourteen stories are good, so if you would like a change of pace from your science fiction and fantasy reading, or are even an aficionado of the horror tale, then by all means either way pick this one up.

SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE

By Alan Dean Foster
Ballantine/Del Rey Books, \$1.95

Reviewed by Mark Mansell

This is a curious book. It is by Alan Dean Foster, who was the ghost-writer of the original STAR WARS novel, though George Lucas was given credit on the cover. SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE is a sequel to the movie novel.

This book is practically identical in style to the first book. It reads like something out of PLANET STORIES.

Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia crash-land on a mining planet on their way to a Rebellion conference. They then meet an old woman who reveals that she knows the location of a certain jewel in a native temple that can heighten the Force -- that mystical quality somewhat akin to ESP. So, the merry band sets off through the jungle, encountering weird creatures, strange traps and hostile natives. They finally find the jewel, but they have to fight Darth Vader -- arch villain of the evil Empire -- to get it.

It's a pleasant little adventure story. Luke and the Princess both come across as kids playing at being conspirators, and their characters are just barely sketched,

a rebel conference on another planet in the same system, crash land on Mimban, where they remain for the duration of the story. I'll not bore you with any more of the yawn-provoking plot, except to say that it has all the internal consistency of a Marvel comic book.

SPLINTER serves as a showcase for Foster's most predictable habits. It has all the ingredients one is accustomed to finding in most of Foster's recent novels or shorter fiction (see his novels MIDWORLD, THE END OF THE MATTER and his short story "Snake Eyes" in STELLAR #4). In these stories you will find cute striped furry little aliens, jewels with bizarre powers, jungle worlds all supplied with the same Ancient Temple a la H. Rider Haggard, all drawn together with the major characters, who are forced into what can only be termed a "search for the Golden Fleece complex". One novel with these hackneyed 1950s PLANET STORIES cliches is bad enough but two or three in a row!

Prose-wise, the writing is adequate, barely. Foster can keep you turning pages, but he doesn't inspire any sense of wonder, which is necessary in this shallow book. Basically, it reads like a juvenile. Luke and the Princess both behave like a couple of kids on their first date whenever they get half-way romantic. Princess Leia doesn't really act like she's smart enough to head a rebellion, although she does give Darth Vader a pretty good fight near the end. Most of the time, we get situations and behavior like this:

"It sees us!" the Princess breathed, gripping Luke's arm so hard it hurt. "Oh, it sees us!"

Of course, no one ever cusses, no matter what the provocation. Although the Princess does say "Damn!" at one point (how shocking!).

So basically, you have a run-of-the-mill juvenile, not bad as such things go, but nothing spectacular. Of course, being a STAR WARS novel, it's selling big and getting a lot of shelf space.

SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE

By Alan Dean Foster
Del Rey Books, 1978, \$1.95

Reviewed by Wilma T. Wright

Alan Dean Foster has done the seemingly impossible; made the novel sequel (not the movie sequel) to STAR WARS boring.

The novel deals with a jungle planet named Mimban (how's that for a cringe producing name) where the Galactic Imperials are doing some illegal mining. Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia, attempting to attend

a rebel conference on another planet in the same system, crash land on Mimban, where they remain for the duration of the story. I'll not bore you with any more of the yawn-provoking plot, except to say that it has all the internal consistency of a Marvel comic book.

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Princess Leia presents a problem for Foster. In all of his fiction I have read, the human women seem to come in three basic types:

- 1.) Screaming Secretaries -- this sort can be found in the background, yelling fervently and/or fainting. They are sometimes young and beautiful and always unable to handle adventure of any sort.
- 2.) Cold Bitches -- women of this type can be found as villains throughout his novels; they are mostly young and beautiful, always competent and ready to castrate Foster's major human male character The Young Hero.
- 3.) Old Hags -- members of this final group usually serve as advisors, helpers and confidants of the Young Hero. They, like type #2, are also competent. Unfortunately, they are also both old and ugly and in some measure live vicariously

off the Young Hero's adventures.

Given the near monopoly these groups hold in Foster's fiction, it's not difficult to understand why he would have trouble with Princess Leia. She is young, beautiful and very competent. In the movie STAR WARS, had it not been for her, Luke and Han Solo would've most likely perished in the Death Star's prison. Given her strong will and Luke's lack thereof she would be in total charge of this adventure. However, she doesn't fit into one of Foster's groups, so for the entire book Foster wavers between George Lucas' characterization of her in the movie and Foster's own Screaming Secretary and Cold Bitch models.

Plotwise, another problem is the irrational actions of Luke and Leia. There is a scene where they get into a fight with each other outside a saloon, and are captured. This particular scene is so contrived the only logical reason for the incident is that Foster had to get them into the clutches of the local representatives of the Empire. As I mentioned earlier, the plot has all the consistency of a Marvel comic book.

Finally, I wish Foster would come up with a new background coupled with a new plot and new people. I'm getting tired of Old Hags, jewels and jungle planets.

All in all a dreadfully stale book. SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE ought to be rated PG for Pretty Gnostly.

COLONY

By Ben Bova
Pocket Books, 1978

Reviewed by Orson Scott Card

Even as advance money for science fiction books reaches unheard-of amounts, science fiction writers are trying to break out of the shabby little sf section of the bookstores and get their books to the front of the store, to the window display, even (the height of achievement) to the grocery store book rack.

I sound sarcastic, but you can bet whatever you're willing to double that I'm right in there too, trying to reach, not the few thousand diehard sf aficionados, but that vast market that bought THORN BIRDS, THE GODFATHER, and every one of James Michener's fourteen billion words.

Niven and Pournelle tried it

with LUCIFER'S HAMMER, and my reaction was to not buy the book for a long time. More than a year, in fact, because deep in my sf fan's heart I knew that they were "selling out", that this would be another one of those fifteen-unrelated-people-thrown-together-by-a-disaster novels. But when I read it, it was good. In fact, it was a hell of a lot better than anything Arthur Hailey's mill has churned out, and it deserved a place high on the bestseller lists.

And now Ben Bova's tried it with COLONY. Set in the same universe as MILLENNIUM (but using none of the plotlines from that book), it's a typical bestseller-type novel which follows a newswoman, a black revolutionary, an Arab revolutionary, and the result of genetic manipulation experiments through the vicissitudes of an attempt by big corporations to take over the world, even if it means destroying it in the process.

But beyond that, there's nothing in it typical of the normal bestseller, whose highest aspiration is to reach the level of junk. Ben can write, you see, and furthermore his sole objective is not just to sell books -- he also intends that his book say something that will linger in the mind. The reporter, Evelyn, learns about the real world and grows up in the process of the novel (What? A best-seller with character development?); colony head, Dr. Cobb, who at first seems all-wise and all-powerful, turns out to have been blinded by his own vision of what the universe should be, and it takes more down-to-earth (love those puns) minds to solve some of the immediate problems; corporate megalomaniac Garrison, thoroughgoing bastard though he is, is also shown to be somewhat loyal and inventive and clever (A villain with some admirable traits and human motivations in a bestseller? Incredible!).

While avoiding the shallowness of the bestseller, Ben has also avoided some typical pitfalls of the sf writer. His L-5 colony is a marvelous thing, and it might have been tempting to milk it to death (cf., RINGWORLD, Riverworld), but he resisted the temptation to gosh-wow us with this marvelous colony and set most of the action on earth, with only the climax of the book occurring on the colony. Furthermore, the solution to the crisis at the end has its groundwork laid in Chapter One; there is no cheating, but I doubt you'll guess what the resolution is until Ben wants you to.

COLONY is a genuine thriller, a good science fiction novel and a

fine piece of writing. My quibbles are minor: Maybe people do fall desperately in love at first screw, as Ben has Bahjat and Denny doing, but I found it hard to believe that a few ecstatic nights could make a woman like Bahjat go off the deep end as she did. Maybe a handful of corporate giants could meet fairly often without anybody knowing about it and without any of them stabbing the others in the back, but I doubt it. Yet even when an item was hard to swallow, it didn't come within parscs of the difficulty of swallowing the TOWERING INFERNO's asinine method of fire-fighting, and I had to admit that Ben might be right and I might be wrong.

I enjoyed COLONY. I was tired when I started reading it nearly at midnight -- I was wide awake when I finished reading it at five a.m. But my guess is that I'm not the only sf reader who'll put these attempts by some of our best writers to tap the mainstream market on the back burner for a while. LUCIFER'S HAMMER passed through 1978 unHugod and unNebulaed; I expect COLONY will do the same in 1979. SF fans will vote for books written for them; SFWA members will vote for books they wish they had written; the awards will be a long time coming to the books that a (shudder) mundane (I just learned the word -- ah the arrogance of fandom) would take to the beach and enjoy reading.

But I can't help thinking that it's a shame. Because Niven and Pournelle and Bova aren't the only writers who'll discover that sf seeds can be planted on the other side of the fence, and I expect to see some of the best science fiction in the next few years written, not for the fans, but for real people who take their fiction like caviar -- now and then, with a furtive feeling of self-indulgence, and not quite sure that they like the taste anyway.

THE ACTS OF KING ARTHUR AND HIS NOBLE KNIGHTS

By John Steinbeck
Ballantine/Del Rey Paperback, 451 pp.
\$4.95

Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

John Steinbeck was that tough and talented American Nobel-prize-winning author of GRAPES OF WRATH who had little use for escapist fantasies of days of yore, right? Wrong.

Here's one of Steinbeck's last works and it's as poetic a fantasy as you could hope to find -- Steinbeck's retelling of seven of the classic tales of King Arthur and his Knights beautifully packaged as a quality Del Rey classic. Steinbeck worked on these "translations" from the Winchester edition of Malory's Arthur stories from 1956 to 1959 and apparently planned to continue indefinitely with the project until he was distracted by other work and had to leave his Arthur book uncompleted. But if the whole cycle of the legend isn't presented here, what is provided is first rate Steinbeck, first rate Arthur and definitely one of the best books of "fantasy" available on the market today.

As an added bonus there is an Appendix with a hundred pages of selections from Steinbeck's letters to two associates, dealing with his Arthurian studies and his personal account of how the "translations" were growing. All in all, THE ACTS OF KING ARTHUR is a real bonanza of Steinbeck and Arthurian scholarship and you really shouldn't let it slip past.

THE CITY OF THE SUN

By Brian M. Stableford
Daw, 1978

Reviewed by Elton Elliott

This book is the fourth in a series of adventures which follow the exploits of the members and crew of the ship Daedalus, as they attempt to recontact some of Earth's lost colonies. This time the intraplanet team find a planet of colonists who have evolved what appears to be the ultimate Utopia. Only one problem, who rules, the humans or an insidious alien parasite. THE CITY OF THE SUN is a genuine ho-hummer of a book. The characters are gray, and seem to move through the plot like zombies. The basic situation was written into the ground decades ago and Stableford has nothing new to say. Stableford, who once wrote an excellent essay entitled "SF: The Medium is the Message", has written some fine works of fiction; however, judging by this book one hopes Mr. Stableford's message isn't becoming ---mediocrity.

However, the book is not a disaster. The ending is well thought out. Stableford fans should get this.

BLIND VOICES

By Tom Reamy

Berkeley/Putnam, 1978

ISBN: 399-12240-0

254 pp., \$8.95

Reviewed by Bill Glass

Tom Reamy's BLIND VOICES is a hybridization, a half-and-half not unlike several of the WonderShow's inmates within its pages.

It begins rather Bradburian in tone. It's the late 1920s in the small prairie town of Hawley, Kansas. Farmers farm themselves, young girls drink cherry phosphates, and barefoot boys run about proclaiming what a phantasmagorical summer it is.

Then, as in Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES and Charles Finney's THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO (Reamy assumes, and deliberately uses, our familiarity with the two earlier works), this American normalcy is broken by the arrival of a traveling show: Haverstock's Traveling Curious and WonderShow. Tiny Tim! Women! As in DR. LAO, a Mermaid, a Medusa and a Satyr (misbilled as a Minotaur!) are displayed. Haverstock manifests freaks, wonders and the four elemental forces of air, earth, fire and water, all before the goggling and/or cynical eyes of Hawley's residents for a mere 50¢ a head, while late summer thunderheads and dark undertones of psychic menace gather about the town.

Reamy focuses not on the Bradburian pair of wonderstruck boys (Finney and Jim, echoing SOMETHING WICKED's Will and Jim) but on three girls -- Francine, Rose and Evelyn -- passing with blushes and giggles through the mid-teen discovery of their own sexuality. In a very neat tripartition, Francine is drawn to the animal maleness of the Minotaur, Rose to the more-normally-human sweet-talk of one of Haverstock's roustabouts, and Evelyn to the ethereal wonder of the albino Angel, The Magic Boy, The Boy Who Can Fly.

All this is fine. Fantasy exists in part to express the ineffable, to exteriorize and dramatize the internal archetypes and private rites-of-passage common but unspoken in most peoples' lives. And, being half illusion to begin with, the carnival, the wondershow, is a most marvelous medium through which to give fantasy flesh.

So it comes with wrench that Reamy, halfway through BLIND VOICES, discards most of what has been built up before, quenches the fantasy with a psience fiction rationale, and segues into a more Stephen-Kingish mood of menace, horror and sensation.

Not that that the novel becomes after this point (a story of awakening powers and coming of age) is bad. There are moments of lyrical discovery alternating with moments of turn-the-screw-tighter suspense which lead up to one hell of a spectacularly pyrotechnical climax.

It's just that things start happening a little too fast, a little too slickly. The pacing becomes slightly uneven, as if scenes needed to tuck a few unraveled loose ends back into the weave of the plot are missing. This is most jarring in the last chapter, which follows directly upon the peak-state of the climax without referring back to it all, an abrupt, precipitous return to the base-state normalcy of the book's beginning without any falling action (or reference back to the surviving major characters) to ease us there.



At the time of his death last Fall, Reamy and his editor were still working the rough parts of the book's ending out. What could have been we will never know. What we are left with is a good first novel, unfortunately flawed, unfortunately all we will have of Reamy working at novel length.

Denied the opportunity to develop his novelist's craft, Reamy will still be remembered for the delicate perfection of his shorter work (to be collected in an omnibus volume by Heritage Press later this year). BLIND VOICES, however, is definitely worth the read; its flaws a blot not against Reamy's talent, but against his death.

1 The books' blurb writer, in an effort to set things straight, malapropos the satyr into a centaur. Everybody else continues to call him a Minotaur.

STARSTONE

Edited by Marion Zimmer Bradley

and Walter Breen

Published by Friends of Darkover, Quarterly, \$2.50 per issue

Reviewed by Paul McGuire III

If you aren't a loyal fan(atic) of Marion Zimmer Bradley's DARKOVER series of novels, there is nothing of interest in this zine for you, since the publication of a Paul Zimmer fragment of a scene from THE SPELL SWORD, which was originally cut from that book, is an event of somewhat dubious magnitude. But if you are a fan, features like the Zimmer out-take mentioned above can be quite interesting, (it's promised that sections from THE PLANET SAVERS written and added by the German translator will appear translated into English for the first time in STARSTONE #2) but to the casual reader they won't seem related to much of anything.

The major part of the zine is completed fiction by fans. Two concern Regis Hastur, one of the keeper Callista, and one is an article named "Field Notes on Intimate Relations" blended with a framing fiction story. There is a second article, and a prototype Regis Hastur story by Ms. Bradley. The issue is filled out with some mediocre art work.

It is overpriced a bit, but not enough to prevent those who are DARKOVER fans from rushing a check off to Box 72, Berkeley, CA, 94701. To them (I should say "us"), it is well worth it.

THE ORANGE R

By John Claggett

Popular Library, 1978, 256 pp. \$1.50

Reviewed by Dr. Dean R. Lambie

Quality is an elusive quantity, as Ted Sturgeon has most graphically stated. Unfortunately, while most junk-food novels escape review because they are perceived as not worth the effort, those same books dot the paperback racks of the country, ready and willing to bend the minds of the uninformed and drain the purses of the unwary. THE ORANGE R is such a work, a novel that should have been pulped in manuscript, a story which gives credence to fears that publishers are experimenting with heuristic computer programs as replacements for human SF editors. John Claggett has written a piece of trash of the sort that leads otherwise reasonably fair-minded gentlemen like Ben Bova and

Jerry Pournelle to spell "enviromentalist" with a capital "Ech". Why then mention the book at all? Well, to save you a buck-fifty for one thing, to spare Spider Robinson the accumulation of more ashes in his woodstove, and finally, to scare the bloody corpses out of the budding writers and readers out there who might get the idea that SF need contain neither science nor fiction.

In THE ORANGE R (yes, the writer could actually have chosen that title), we follow the short career of junior Powerman Kirk Patrick who fumbles through an America a century or so hence, an America ruled by the power companies with their leaky nuclear plants, an America divided into Normal and Robert areas. The Roberts, you see, are those unfortunate who live in the irradiated countryside near the huge numbers of nuc plants that the evil power companies have built for the benefit of the Normals in the cities. Naturally, when Powerman Patrick is transferred to Vermont Roberts country (wherein over 30 nuclear plants lend a nice glow to things), the well-indoctrinated Powerman falls in love with Anne Martin. Unfortunately, schoolmarm Martin has an orange, fluorescent "R" on her left hand... yep, she's a second-class citizen, an inferior future nigger! Ah, the suspense ... will Patrick defy the Vermont Powermaster ... will he join with the rebel underground of the Roberts, and take control of the nuc plants ... will he ever be able to stop laughing at the impossibility of solar power ... and will he ever escape his plastic-baggle radiation suit to enjoy the purity of Anne's nubility, yet radioactive, body? Well, you figure it out, and while you're at it, figure out why the book ends with Adam and Eve (Ghod is my witness!), those cute little mutant Big Head children whose telepathic and precognitive abilities suggest that Claggett might have the gall to write a sequel to this mess.

Let me be very clear; I am not a lover of nuclear power plants and I certainly wouldn't want my sister to marry one. But the nucs are a necessary, and one hopes, temporary evil. There's simply no other way to make it to the 21st Century without their hot little cores. If Claggett is going to write a knee-jerk pro-solar, anti-nuclear polemic, however, he ought to have some knowledge of the basics of nuclear engineering, radiation sickness, cancer, mutation, evolution, and solar power options. He does not. All he seems to know about are the hunting and fishing opportunities around Middlebury (disguised as "Waybury") Vermont. And, even there, he has

some pretty silly ideas about the biopsychology of deer.

In the course of propping-up his cardboard characters, who engage in a lot of maid-butler chatter and "Oh, John ... oh, Martha" sighs, Claggett even fails to explain how all those radioactive folks came to be called "Roberts". Let us hope this is not a denigration of the memory of J. Robert Oppenheimer, a deeply humane man who was both father to, and conscience for, the Nuclear Age.

And, only a truly anti-scientific moron could invent "deradders" -- which apparently work on the principle of the "Philosopher's Stone" to remove radioactivity from air, water and food -- and then locate his people inside, and his nuclear plants outside, those "deradders" influence! Somebody should also point out to this drivell-writer

I GAVE MY RIGHT EYE
FOR THE WISDOM OF
THE GODS, AND NOW I
CAN'T GET OUT OF THIS
STINKING HOSPITAL!



that there are already nuclear power and weapons facilities in Arizona -- as clearly shown on my "Nuclear America Map" (easily worth the 75¢ to War Resisters League, 339 LaFayette Street, NY, NY 10012, no matter how you feel about nuclear energy). Thus, Tucson could hardly be Normal, non-Robert country in Claggett's fatuous future.

Don't buy this book, but don't forget about it either. THE ORANGE R is representative of the dregs which must be cleaned out of printed SF before we have the right to lambaste the spaceships that go "swishhh" in STAR WARS.

MONUMENT

By Lloyd Biggle, Jr.
Bantam, \$1.75, 215 pp.

Reviewed by Paul McGuire III

Suppose a sailor had reached Hawaii years before Captain Cook and he had tried to prepare the natives to survive, on their own terms, the inevitable contact and colonization by the Western World. There doesn't seem to be much of anything that he could have done. Now picture it on a larger, inter-galactic scale.

Obrien, once a wildcat space explorer, discovered a paradise planet inhabited by a primitive and care-free lost colony of humans. As hero and wise man, he became little less than a god to them. Knowing how they would be exploited into extinction when the universe at large learned of the beautiful world's existence, Obrien, when dying with age, taught a select group of young people "the plan". There was no way to know how much they understood, but on the day he dies it is needed, for a spaceship lands and the delicate and desperate game for survival begins.

The above is the premise of Mr. Biggle's novel, MONUMENT. It fits nicely in a class with Eric Frank Russell's THE GREAT EXPLOSION. Like the novels of Nevil Shute, this is smoothly paced, unpretentious narration using the perceptions of several vivid characters deeply affected by each other, and the dramatic events.

THE GOTHIC HORROR AND OTHER WEIRD TALES

By George T. Wetzel, illustrated by Tim Kirk
Weirdbook Press, \$4.00

Reviewed by Mark Mansell

Like Weirdbook Press's two previous productions--TOASTSTOOL WINE and HOLLOW FACES, MERCILESS MOONS--THE GOTHIC HORROR is a lavishly illustrated 8 1/2 x 11" paperback. Suitably enough, there are thirteen horror stories collected here, mostly from fanzines of the 1950s.

These tales are mostly in a Lovecraftian vein, dealing with pursuing horrors, nightmares, frightful gods and the like. For fans of this sort of thing, they will give enjoyment. The best among these are "Nightmare House", "Eater of the Dead", "What the Moon Brings", "A Tale of the Elder Gods" and "Caer Sidhi", which was previously included in one of August Derleth's Arkham House anthologies.

The best tale in the collection, however, isn't one of the Lovecraftian ones. "The Pirate of Shell Castle" has elements of detective, pirate and historical adventure stories in it. It is about how Blackbeard, unexplainably surviving into the Post-Civil War period, plans to hold Charleston for ransom by blockading it with Monitor-type ironclads.

The Tim Kirk illustrations are among the best work he's done. He manages to produce quite evocative images in a fashion quite different from a Coyo or a Fabian, but just as effective. The best are the front and back covers, as well as the illustrations for "The Pirate of Shell Castle" and "Nightmare House".

This is an interesting volume and is recommended to those who enjoy the genre. The \$4 price is worth it for its collector's value and the Kirk illos alone.

[Weirdbook Press, POB 35, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226]

SWORDS AGAINST DARKNESS III
Edited by Andrew J. Offutt
Zebra Books, \$1.95

Reviewed by Mark Mansell

You might say that this volume represents the "state of the art" in the field of heroic fantasy (sword and sorcery). Former SFWA President Offutt has assembled 14 original stories and an article from some of the best, and some of the up-and-coming best, authors in the genre.

The two first stories are the best in the collection. The heroes in Ramsey Campbell's "The Pit of Wings" and Richard L. Tierney's "The Sword of Spartacus" have both appeared in the first two volumes of the S.A.D. series. In the Campbell story, the hero is to be sacrificed to blood-drinking winged creatures, and the Tierney story has a Samarian gladiator bring doom to a Colosseum-full of Romans by using the sword which once belonged to the rebellious slave Spartacus to summon dark powers. These incursions into heroic fantasy are a bit surprising from these two authors, both known primarily for their horror and Lovecraftian tales.

Another surprising feature about this anthology is the amount of semi-prozine or former semi-prozine authors from THE DIVERSIFIER, SPACE AND TIME, WHISPERS AND PHANTASY DIGEST (and among others) who appear with their first (or nearly so) professional heroic fantasy sales. Among

these are Wayne Hoods, David C. Smith, David Madison, David Drake and SF's premier interviewer Darrel Schweitzer (his tale "The Hag" being the first in his Julian the Apostate series which has been running in the Australian zine VOID).

Good stories by Tanith Lee, Jon DeClès (Marion Zimmer Bradley's brother), Robert E. Vardeman, Manly Wade Wellman, Geo. W. Proctor and M.A. Washil are also included in the collection. The only thing I didn't like was Kathleen Rebsch's vampire poem "Revenant", which is rather dull free verse.

Topping off the anthology is Poul Anderson's magnificent article "On Thud and Blunder". Anderson delves into his own writing experience and activities in the Society for Creative Anachronism to explain which elements in heroic fantasy are most liable to errors, and how authors could avoid them. A must-read for anyone thinking of writing heroic fantasy.

Aside from a rather comic-bookish cover illustration, it is an extremely good collection, well worth the price for the Anderson article alone.

KALKI
By Gore Vidal
Random House, 1978, \$10.00
Reviewed by Orson Scott Card

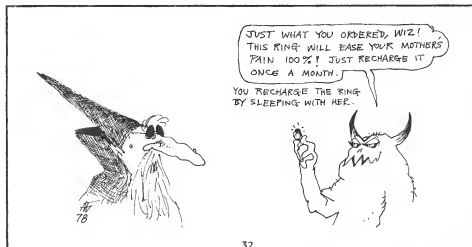
There is nothing in KALKI that is not familiar ground to science fiction readers: Jim Kelly claims to be Kalki, the last incarnation of Vishnu, who will usher in the end of the world. However, the actual end is brought by a lethal and fast-spreading bacterium Jim Kelly isolated while serving with the army in Vietnam. And Kelly/Kalki has

arranged for himself, his wife, and three sterile but well-educated friends to repopulate the world. Unfortunately, there's a hitch that even Vishnu didn't suspect -- but more of that in a moment.

The end-of-the-world scenes, the methods of survival after -- we've read them all a dozen times, and Vidal adds nothing new to our speculations on humanity's finale. But then -- Vidal was not writing science fiction. Where One of Us would have labored lovingly over every detail of survival after the end, Vidal passes over it with the same quick efficiency he uses to dismiss Jimmy Carter as a redneck twice-born president.

In fact, long before KALKI is a science fiction novel, it is a Gore Vidal novel. It has Vidal's typical first-person character who is not really all that vital to the machinations of the plot, but whose attitudes are the filter through which Vidal's vision of the world can emerge. It has the strange, twisted, yet magnificent hero occupying center stage (Kalki, of course), whose dreams and visions are mad yet strangely sane and wonderful -- but who is doomed to failure. Do we see Burr in Kalki? Of course -- and Julian and a dozen other Vidal heroes.

Like Herman Hesse, Vidal keeps writing the same novel over and over. And if this time the novel has the trappings of science fiction, it does not signal a new departure -- just a new game. (And don't misunderstand: Writing the same novel over and over is not a bad idea. Sometime you're bound to do it right. I hated SIDDHARTHA and STEPPENWOLF; I loved NARCISSEUS AND GOLDMUND and BENEATH THE WHEEL. Likewise, with Vidal I loved BURR and JULIAN; I hated MYRA BRECKENRIDGE and WASHINGTON D.C. How I feel about KALKI is what this is all about.



not Vidal's best novel. His first-person character, an aviatrix/bisexual named Teddy Ottinger, is one of the most intensely boring first person characters I have ever suffered through. First person characters who are not the protagonist of the book are hard to bring off. Vidal succeeds often -- but not this time. However, Kalki and his nemesis, Dr. Giles Lowell, are so interesting that the book itself succeeds in being interesting and, ultimately, rewarding. On the trivial (but decisive) level of entertainment, KALKI is worth the read.

To those of us whose first concern is science fiction, however, KALKI should be required reading. Not because Vidal has done a better job than most science fiction writers -- I could name a dozen sf writers who could have done as good a job, in their own way, with Vidal's material as Vidal did. KALKI should be read simply because Vidal in no way partakes of our delicious inbreeding. And the very fact that Vidal is not rewriting Silverberg/Kornbluth/Pohl/everybody means that we are getting Fresh Blood.

How does a non-science fiction writer write science fiction? We had a taste with John Hersey's WHITE LOTUS and MY PETITION FOR MORE SPACE and discovered that future visions could be presented with such reality and simplicity that our sensawunda could be thrown away and we could discover, instead, deep and beautiful characters. Gore Vidal's KALKI, which in most ways is merely his wish-fulfillment (yes, folks, Vidal would love to destroy the world of 1980, which is precisely what he has done) and a chance to stab the sacred and profane cattle of modern America until they screech, gives us a taste of future visions so simply presented and so much taken for granted that the author can fulfill a completely different purpose, the savaging of America and, by extension, the whole human race.

Perhaps the best explanation of what we can learn from Gore Vidal is his ending. If Niven and Pournelle had written KALKI, the best part of the book would have been the five survivors' discovery that they could survive against insurmountable odds. If Robert Heinlein had written KALKI he would have agreed with Vidal enough to have the survivors discover that Kalki's wife and he were Rh-incompatible, so that Dr. Lowell, who knew it all along, is the only possible father of the rest of the human race -- but Heinlein would have made his characters live with that fact, make the best of it, and go on anyway. Harlan Ellison would agree with all

that, but he would make Kalki hate Dr. Lowell so badly that he would force Lowell to donate his semen for the good of the cause and then would have killed him. But Vidal simply has Kalki kill Lowell on the spot, and the human race is doomed.

Instead, the monkeys will inherit the earth. And it is a credit to Vidal that instead of making us feel a tragic sense of loss about the poor, fallen human race, he makes us accept the monks' inheritance of the earth with a sense of relief. We have seen in the book too much of mankind's highest achievement, the United States, to really mourn the loss.

Vidal lies a lot in the book, however. He exaggerates for humorous effect, sneering at, in turn, hack writers, politicians, the military, television personalities, people with fashionable cancer, crowds of people, individual people, God, motherhood, science, and everything else, if there's anything else left over. Yet as he turns each of these into corpses, we know that Vidal has not killed the real thing. He has killed only a distorted image of what the corpse might have looked like with all the blemishes magnified. In the end no one was kind or loving or unselfish -- all acted for their own petty purposes, and even those who loved the world so much they would destroy it in order to preserve it ended up merely destroying themselves.

The world isn't like that. There are good people. I've met thirty or forty of them, and that's a lot. Vidal is wrong. The world is not yet Sodom -- Abraham can still find more than ten good people in order to make the world worth saving.

And yet KALKI left me with the haunting feeling that there was something graceful about four billion people leaving life suddenly, without panic, without a chance to soil the last moments with repentance or greed; four billion people leaving the stage for the next act to begin. And while no one in the audience would applaud either their act or their departure, there was still a kind of beauty in the way the extras all went through their paces, carrying on small private plays far better than the larger play that so bored us all. It is for the extras that KALKI makes us weep; and perhaps, as the monkeys grow up, they will find a way (Vidal seems to hope) to leave the extras in charge of the show, and push the stars and the director completely out of the theatre.



CYCLES OF WAR: THE NEXT SIX YEARS
By R.E. McMaster, Jr.
Hardcover, 217 pp., \$10.00
War Cycles Institute, Box 1673,
Kalispell, MT 59901

Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

Remember Robert Heinlein's little classic "The Year of the Jackpot"? If so, you'll recall that Heinlein postulated a time when all the multitude of cycles that influence and control human affairs would reach their climax at once. When that point was reached all hell would break loose and civilization come screeching to a halt.

R.E. McMaster, Jr., gives no evidence of ever having heard of "Jackpot" or Heinlein, but he has gathered a bookload of intriguing evidence to indicate that our real-life Jackpot might be coming up in the next few years. CYCLES OF WAR is mainly a review of the literature, for McMaster makes no pretense of having discovered any principles himself or of having done any original research. What he had done is gather theories and speculations from a variety of sources in an attempt to show that the early 1980s have every chance of becoming the Jackpot years for western civilization.

And there is impressive evidence to back his case. The book starts small with an analysis from PSYCHOLOGY TODAY showing that cycles in American literature are accurate predictors of war, with the next one scheduled for the early 80s. McMaster then considers a number of stock market cycles, historical and cultural cycles, the Kondratieff wave and the cycle-based forecasts of stock market king W.D. Gann. In addition to these fairly solid sources, McMaster also cites such borderline evidence as the so-called Jupiter Effect when the major plan-

ties line up in 1982, various astrological predictions for that decade and the visions of a variety of other prophets and seers who have foreseen disaster coming up.

A secondary theme in CYCLES OF WAR is that the looming disaster will be brought on by a new Caesar -- that it is just at this point in the cycle of history that a Caesar-figure appears. McMaster's Caesar is, of course, Jimmy Carter and there's no denying that all the psychological factors for a new Caesarism are probably present in Carter's makeup. Not content with working this theme into the main text, McMaster adds a lengthy appendix on the subject in which he attacks his version of "humanism" and promotes his version of christianity.

The book's short-comings are immediately apparent -- McMaster is not a polished, professional writer and he alternates between simply dumping ideas in your lap undigested on one hand, and forcing them into the mold of his own opinions on the other. But in the absence of any other compendium on the subject, CYCLES OF WAR is a valuable reference and a good potential source of off-beat ideas. It's worth looking into before the Year of the Jack-pot arrives.

THE ADAM EXPERIMENT

By Geoffrey Simmons
Arbor House, N.Y., 1978, 200 pp.
\$8.95

Reviewed by Roy Tackett

It is a pitiful thing when a mainstream writer attempts Science Fiction. It is even more pitiful when the writer tries it as his second book. Geoffrey Simmons has had previously published THE Z-PAPERS, a medical-based suspense story which received good reviews.

THE ADAM EXPERIMENT also is strong on medical background and I would not attempt to question Simmons' expertise in that area since he is in the medical business. However, when he mixes his doctor story with Science Fiction he has crossed into an area about which I have a small knowledge as is fair game.

Do you remember Pioneer X? How could you forget it? That was the one that was launched on 3 March 1972 towards the outer reaches carrying a plaque on which was engraved a roadmap of its origin along with a sketch of a nude man and (incomplete) woman. THE ADAM

EXPERIMENT starts on 29 October 1991 at "Mission Control" in Houston when a monitoring computer types out this message: "Termination signal received from Pioneer X". The NOO on duty, somewhat bemused, digs into the old files on Pioneer X to try to find out what the message means. He finds: "In the event that the satellite's external seal is ever broken and the scientific equipment inside is either tampered with or removed, a termination signal will be transmitted to Mission Control".

I do not know if that is fact or fiction but it makes an exciting beginning for a novel. That's a grabber. Someone out there has intercepted Pioneer X. It should make for an exciting story and I suppose that to the ordinary reader THE ADAM EXPERIMENT is an exciting story. But I am an old sciencefictioneer and there are too many flaws in the story to make it exciting for me. It disturbs the flow of continuity when the reader is hit between the eyes every few pages with the club of the writer's ignorance.

The ultimate goal is to reach the stars. With our current technology that will take a long time. On Space Lab 5, "hovering 300,000 miles out", two methods of solving the problem are being considered. One experiment, conducted by Dr. Gregor, is to put the crew in suspended animation; the other, conducted by Dr. Olmschied, leads to the generations ship. Olmschied and his lovely assistant, Dr. Cortney Miles, are experimenting with monkeys to see if primates can successfully breed and come to term under conditions of weightlessness without any ill or strange effects on mother and offspring.

A meteor tears through the space lab wrecking both experiments. Gregor departs but a Dr. Baumeister convinces Olmschied and Miles that their experiment must go on and since monkeys really would not have proven anything, it should be completed by humans.

"Man will conquer the stars", Baumeister says. "He can only do it by colonizing the universe first" (Would I lie to you? That is right there on page 113.)

So Cortney climbs into the sack (Mid-air, actually, no weight, you see) with Dr. John Hicks, who is Baumeister's assistant and handsome and all that, and the Adam Experiment gets underway.

Enter the villains. The aliens from Out There determined that Cortney's child will not be born; "No human child shall be born in the cosmos".

These aliens, believe me, you wouldn't believe and I can't bring myself to give you Simmons' description.

The book is full of misspellings and typographical errors. As I said above I would not think of challenging Simmons on medical points but it is obvious that he knows nothing of physics, astronomy or space travel. He doesn't seem to know much about writing either. Most of the characters and situations seem to have had their origin in the 1950s and sci-fi movies.

After many unbelievable trials and tribulations the ADAM EXPERIMENT ends with the words: "To be continued..."

I hope not.

THE RAVENS OF THE MOON

By Charles L. Grant
Doubleday, 1978, 184 pp., \$6.95
Cover art by Fred Marcellino

Reviewed by Gretchen Rix

There are a lot of characters in Charles L. Grant's intrigue (sic) novel THE RAVENS OF THE MOON. So many people are introduced so soon in so strange a setting that it takes quite a while to get them all sorted out properly. Afterwards, though, the book fairly zips along.

THE RAVENS OF THE MOON is about a futuristic government coup and the machinations involved in getting it off. Shanon Raillie is one of these machinations. A magician and political lobbyist, Shanon is earmarked as leader of the revolution that sets ratgangs and soldiers and the present government at each other's throats. He is also accused of having murdered a senator just to get things off the ground. But he didn't. And he wants to find out who did. His life depends on it.

What Shanon finds involves him in the lives of his supposed victim's daughter, Cato, and that of the late senator's former employee, Yenkin, who has turned up to aid Cato. Two soldiers, one of whom is Shanon's uncle, are also important pawns in this story. Many, many other characters are involved, and as each comes to his/her own conclusions about what made the revolution and about what is really happening to their world, they make plans to set things right.

Placed in a world-united future, THE RAVENS OF THE MOON is a fast-paced little war story with good writing throughout.

SMALL PRESS NOTES

BY THE EDITOR

Small Press includes fanzines, I guess. But only those with a modicum of quality and something special in them I think might be of interest to the SFR readership.

For instance, SF & F 36 has an interview with Chelsea Quinn Yarbro plus a fascinating article, "The New Picture of the Solar System" by Richard Lupoff which traces sf through history by means of the knowledge and facts known at the times about our sun and planets and moons, and goes on from now.

This zine's name is confusing: SF & F 36 tends to make you think the '36' is the issues number. Nope. This is #7, Fall, 1978. And it costs 75¢. From: Jim Purviance, 13 West Summit Dr., Redwood City, CA 94062.

FANTASY CROSSROADS #14 has a ravishing Stephen Fabian cover done in the style of Bok. The result is Steve's great technical precision and anatomy combined with Bok's solid, blocky style and fantasy vision. A superb rendering.

I am very impressed with the interior drawings by John Steward--macabre, crawly realism.

Stephen Riley is a very competent artist and contributes heavily to this issue. The Kenneth Smith portfolio is impressive.

FANTASY CROSSROADS isn't all artwork. There is a lot of verse by Bok, Ganley, Robert E. Howard and others. Plus major fiction by Charles R. Saunders... and a serial, GHOR, KIN-SLAYER, written chapter by chapter by a series of authors. This issue's contributors are Darrell Schweitzer (Chapt. 9) and A. E. Van Vogt (Chapt. 10). These read satirical, mockery, jape, and fun.

FANTASY CROSSROADS costs \$3 per issue, and is not available by subscription. You buy issue-by-issue. From: Jonathan Bacon, Box 12428, Shawnee Mission, KS 66212.

Also \$3 per copy is an equally beautiful offset magazine, SHAYOL #1, which stuns immediately with a full-color wraparound cover painting by R.A. Stine.

Inside this issue is work by Michael Bishop, Steve Fabian, Tim Kirk, Tom Reamy, Barry Smith, Lisa Tuttle, Steven Utley, and Howard Waldrop.

This is a professionally prepared, slick-stock, el neat product-ion.

SHAYOL #1 is dated November 1977 and is still available. Also sent for review was SHAYOL #2, dated Feb. 1978, still \$3., and an even more beautiful magazine. The art is absolutely superb! And there is a new story by Harlan Ellison, "Opium", which slices you open like a razor and then heals the wound. Amazing writer.

There is much much more in this issue. An in-depth interview with Tim Kirk, a funny "Thick Thews and Busty Babes" by Phillip Bolick...

SHAYOL is published irregularly by Flight Unlimited, Inc. [a front for fans] at 4324 Belleview, #3, Kansas City, MO 64111. Get it.

THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE is attempted (and done well, on the whole) by Larry Gonik for Rip Off Press [\$1.25 from POB 14158, San Francisco, CA 94114.]

Gonik is a very good cartoonist. I have only one grunch: the text says, 'At the edge of a spiral galaxy called the milky way, a cloud of gas began to collapse. Pulled together by the force of its own gravity, the compressed mass heated up, spinning faster and faster...'

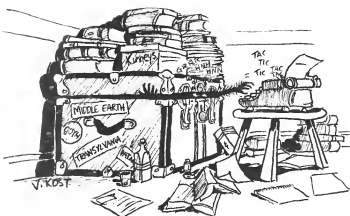
Uhhh. Why does one gas cloud collapse and not another? And what makes it spin? Does a gas cloud have gravity?

Bob Frazier is trying, but he still makes mistakes. The Anthology of Speculative Poetry is a fine, workmanlike, informative title. I see no reason to fuck it up by titling the magazine TAOFSF #3. Because in small type under that arcane bit he has to decipher it for the reader with the full title. Dumb.

Physically the magazine is acceptable, with heavy cream cover and pages, offset, with some fair art.

This issue isn't all poetry; it contains a short story ("I, Cartographer" by Michael Bishop, and an interview with Bishop.

Some of the poetry is good, some ridiculous and unintentionally funny.



Volume #3 costs \$2.50. Send the order to Bob Frazier, Box 491, Nantucket, MA 02554.

TABU SPANISH OF MEXICO---Words Your Teacher Never Taught You! strikes me as something every writer should have for reference, for lending a certain kind of scene or dialogue that extra bit of authenticity.

The spanish words with english definitions are organized by category: Anatomy and Bodily Functions, Sex, Sex Relations, Crime, Crooks, Cops, Jails, and Drugs, Cantinas, Liquor, Related, General Slang... etc., etc. A Goldmine.

\$2.00 from Valcour & Krueger, POB 4384, No. Park Station, San Diego, CA 92104.

THE WHOLE FANZINE CATALOG #2 is Brian Earl Brown's attempt to give interested people access to current fanzines. He gives all you need to know to order and gives an idea of each zine's content or editorial approach. Worthwhile project and as issues go by I'm sure Brian's coverage will broaden to include UK, European, and Australian zines. He covers 30 American zines in this Sept. 78 issue. Price: 35¢, 3/\$1. from Brian Earl Brown, 16711 Burt Road, #207, Detroit, MI 48219.

THRUST #11 (with an effective Gene Day cover) arrived recently, with its usual chock-a-block lineup of interviews (Theodore Sturgeon, Joe Haldeman, C.J. Cherryh), "My Colum" by Ted White, interesting articles, reviews and good to fair artwork. I recommend this one: Doug Fratz has a fine sense of what editing is all about. Send \$1.50 to Thrust Publications, POB 746, Adelphi, MD 20783.

IF THE SPACE SHUTTLE CAN'T COME TO SKYLAB, SKYLAB WILL COME TO THE SPACE SHUTTLE.

MOVING VISIONS

SF, Fantasy and Horror Film News

BY BILL WARREN

I'm surprised that television movies aren't jumping onto the science fiction bandwagon more than they are. The money poured into *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA* (which I'll comment on in the next issue) would indicate some interest on the part of TV moguls in science fiction--but apparently not. And perhaps they're right, as the early Nielson ratings on *BS GALACTICA* have it way down (#16) in the pack. TV movie fantasies are about 15% of the programming, as per usual. ABC has no made-for-TV movies announced this year, and they used to make at least half of them.

In the animated feature of *FLASH GORDON* on NBC, he will go to Warsaw to confront Ming and Hitler. Also on NBC: In *HUMAN FEELINGS*, Nancy Walker, emulating George Burns, plays God ~~His~~ Herself, here to destroy sinful Las Vegas. *KISS MEETS THE PHANTOM* features the rock group versus a mad scientist in an amusement park, who uses robots to further his evil ends. The remake of *THE THIEF OF BAGDAD* will also be on NBC, as will *SUMMER OF FEAR* in which Linda Blair again finds herself confronting the supernatural. The network's *THE TIME MACHINE* is a new, updated version of the novel, with John Beck as the Time Traveler; I imagine this is the pilot for a new series.

Someone told me that the Phoenix worldcon committee foolishly did not accept the premiere screening of NBC's telefeature, *A FIRE IN THE SKY*, about a comet hitting Phoenix. The production company was anxious to show the film to the convention, the story goes, and indeed held the premiere of the film a few days after the convention in the same auditorium used for the Hugo awards.

From CBS: *DEVIL DOG: THE HOUND OF HELL* with Yvette Mimieux and Richard Crenna, as a suburban couple who find their lives threatened by a dog given their children by a devil-worshipping old man.

CBS will also be showing a bizarre horror tale, *THE PLANTS ARE WATCHING*, about murderous flowers. *SPECTER* is not the same as the Gene Roddenberry telefeature of a couple

of seasons ago, but a new mystery-horror tale set in San Francisco. *REVENGE OF THE KILLER BEES* is a sequel to the B-movie in which the insects were finally immobilized in a sports arena.

Some of these movies, scheduling being what it is, will have already been shown by the time you read this.

A pilot film project created by Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts has been purchased by Universal; this is "Time Train," in which we are told "the principl ^s pick the exact year they want to regress to so's to change an early life pattern for better or worse."

Bill Melendez, who does the "Peanuts" specials and features, is also doing *THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE* as an animated special. And in England, a new "Quatermass" series starring Sir John Mills, is currently shooting. I do not know for sure if Nigel Kneale is writing the series, but I fervently hope so; in my opinion, he's one of the best SF writers in the world.

The mini-series of *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES*, from a script by Richard Matheson, is now filming in Europe. The producers are Milton Subotsky and Andrew Donnelly, and the executive producers are Charles Fries and Dick Berg. Subotsky was one of the founders of Amicus, who made a group of good horror movies

in the 1950s and early 1960s, including *THE SKULL*, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* and Robert Bloch's fine *THE HOUSE THAT DRIPPED BLOOD* (in which not a drop of blood can be seen). The director of *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* is Michael Anderson, which depresses me no end, since he's strictly pedestrian and unimaginative. (He also directed *LOGAN'S RUN* and the dreadful *ORCA*.) The special effects are under the direction of John Stears, and the art direction is by Ashton Gorton. This is also an NBC production.

Among the newly announced theatrical films is *THE AMITYVILLE HORROR*, starring Rod Steiger and directed by Stuart Rosenberg. This is based on the boring, silly, "True-to-life" best-seller.

An updated comedy version of *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*, perhaps to star Warren Beatty and Julie Christie, has been announced--as if that hadn't been done before. (Question for you readers who thought my typo about Nicholson in *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* was a real error: name me two modern-day comedy versions of *JEKYLL & HYDE*. A hint: one starred Jerry Lewis, and the other was British. Don't check any reference sources.)

United Artists will release the Japanese *STAR WARS* ripoff, *MESSAGE FROM SPACE*. It stars Vic Morrow. *WEATHERMAN*, about future weather battles, may star Clint Eastwood, but probably won't.

Roger Corman has announced yet another multi-million-dollar project that if it ever gets filmed will cost much less. This one is *WORLD WAR III*, and the cast Corman says he wants is John Wayne, William Holden, Peter O'Toole and Richard Burton. He is reportedly contacting Russia's Mosfilm as a possible coproducer.

The sound track for *ROCKENSTEIN* has already been recorded, so



the film will be shot. (However, the rock version of FAUST, with Christopher Lee singing Mephistopheles, has also been recorded though the film remains unshot.) ROCKENSTEIN features Johnny London in the lead, and was written by Roger Karshner.

CLONUS features Tim Donnelly, David Hooks, Peter Graves and Keenan Wynn; the film is directed by Robert S. Fiveson from a script by Ron Smith and Bob Sullivan.

THE CLONES, not to be confused with a film of the same name made several years ago, is a TV movie starring Robert Forster, Ray Milland and Peter Graves. The script is by John Shaner and Al Ramrus, who wrote DAMIEN OMEN II.

Robert Altman's next film, probably (unless A PERFECT COUPLE is released first) will be QUINTET. This stars Paul Newman, Vittorio Gassman, Bibi Andersson, Fernando Rey, Brigitte Fossey and Nina Van Pallandt. In an interview in FILM COMMENT, Altman said "It's set probably in the future, or else in the present in a parallel world.... It's of no known culture. The international cast...was chosen to select the weird meld in this society.... There is a game called Quintet, which is the game of the future... (It's) their art, their war, their literature. It's the only thing---the only remaining thing in the culture." He denies any parallels to ROLLERBALL, since "the violence in the film is not for the sake of violence, or for the sake of those people in the audience who enjoy watching violence." The film was shot in Montreal and above the Arctic Circle.

Altman's films, even when unsatisfactory, are still always the work of a truly novel and personal director, and there's been something good about each of them. Among them: M*A*S*H, NASHVILLE, BUFFALO BILL AND THE INDIANS, 3 WOMEN, THIEVES LIKE US, BREWSTER MCCLOUD, THE LONG GOODBYE, A WEDDING, IMAGES, and CALIFORNIA SPLIT.

MICROWAVE MASSACRE, currently shooting, hardly sounds promising. Nor does NOCTURNA, starring Yvonne De Carlo, John Carradine and Brother Theodore. Laurence Olivier plays Van Helsing in a new version of DRACULA.

As far as I'm concerned, the big news is that German director Werner Herzog, who made some of the best films I've seen in the last couple of years, is filming a remake of NOSFERATU, which was illegally based on DRACULA (the book). This stars the bizarre but magnificent Klaus Kinski, as well as Bruno Gerz. Fox is planning to release

this in March. Herzog is a strange fellow who makes fine movies. Of his, I've seen AGUIRE---THE WRATH OF GOD, THE MYSTERY OF KASPAR HAUSER (also delightfully called EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF AND GOD AGAINST ALL) and STROSZEK. Herzog is a wonderful director and I'm tremendously glad he's making NOSFERATU.

Titles are somewhat a better clue as to what the movie is like than the filmmakers wanted. I recently saw two examples of this. DRACULA'S DOG is the better of the two.

Jose Ferrer comes to the U.S. from Transylvania to warn Michael Pataki, a non-vampire descendant (and the last in line) of the Draculas that a former slave of Count Dracula---and his dog---have come to the U.S. to turn Pataki into a vampire so they'll have a master. (Actually, they don't know about the dog until fairly late.)

That's a preposterous premise even for a horror movie, but the film isn't quite as bad as I expected. I like the title---it's direct, simple and to the point. The film is indeed about Dracula's vampire dog (a pleasant-natured Doberman that was lounging around the theatre the day I saw the film), and he vampirizes almost every other dog in the film. The last shot is of a glowing-eyed puppy feeding off the corpses of little animals; the question as to whether it would grow up to be a full-size vampire dog, or remain a little bitty puppy of not great harm, did occur to me. (Joe Dante has suggested the film should be called PUPPIES FROM HELL.)

The film is shamefully padded; there are many shots of the characters driving aimlessly around, glaring at the ominous forest. And some scenes seem almost designed to minimize tension. A well-conceived sequence in which a pack of vampire

dogs attack Ferrer and Pataki in a small cabin is drained of tension by poor editing and photography. It's not quite a terrible film, but isn't much good.

Like ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES! Yes folks, that's the title, right down to the exclamation point. This was made in 1977 by a group in San Diego, and when it begins---with an amusing title song---it look as if it might amount to something. In the first half-hour, however, the filmmakers (whose names I didn't catch) exhausted all their ideas, and have to doggedly plod their way to the end of the film. It looks and sounds very cheap and sleazy, like a low-budget locally-made TV commercial, but the basic mistake was overstatement.

The best way to handle subject matter like this---a spoof of monster movies---is to do it with a very straight face. The gags should be delivered as if the characters really meant the lines, and the plot structure and look should emulate those of the monster pictures of the 1950s. But this film tends to oversell everything; it's excessively cute over and again, and reaches for gags. Sometimes they adopt the straight-faced approach, but often when they do this the scenes are too full of comic folderol, as when a conference is held in a tiny room and the group solemnly crawls over a table to reach their seats. That's not bad, but the scene is overburdened with other Funny Stuff, and the content is repeated again and again, as if we didn't get it the first time.

Also, there's no "explanation" for the tomatoes turning killer, and just what they do to people is never clear. There is a funny scene that at least had some of the right ideas: a tomato the size of a watermelon, carefully chained down, is being examined by a soverfaced scientist; in a voice laden with doom, he informs the hero that the jig may be up for humanity, for the huge to-

THE TROUBLE WITH HELL IS THAT THE AMBIENT TEMPERATURE IS ABOVE THE FLASH POINT OF ALCOHOL.

WHICH MEANS YOU CAN'T LINGER OVER YOUR DRINK.



AL 78

to before themis, "God save us all, a cherry tomato."

The movie is based on a clever idea, but the people who made it lacked the talent and courage to bring it off; they didn't really know what they were doing.

Another film written by someone who didn't know what he was doing is HALLOWEEN; fortunately the director comes as near to saving the film as seems humanly possible. However, the director and writer are the same person, John Carpenter. He also directed the non-fantastic and boring ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13, and directed and co-wrote DARK STAR; he also co-wrote EYES OF LAURA MARS. He's got a great deal of promise as a director, but his writing is so turned-in on movies that it has utterly no relationship to real life on any level.

In his movies, people behave in ways calculated to further the plot, not realistically at all. Now it's perfectly true that in all movies, that's what really happens: the characters are manipulated by the writer. But it should never look like that's what's happening. Behavior of the characters should be consistent and believable; they shouldn't do stupid things that look like their only motivation is to make the scene come out right. This happens throughout HALLOWEEN. A girl is strangled with a phone cord; she does nothing at all to fight back, though she could, because this would introduce a complication that Carpenter wanted to avoid.

The killer is an escaped lunatic; as a child on Halloween years before, he had murdered his older sister, apparently because she had sex with her boyfriend, though this is unclear. As an adult, he murders without any apparent motivation at all. Hell, even the craziest killers are working with some kind of internal logic.

Carpenter seems to have recognized that he provided no realistic basis for the killer's motivations; at one point, he has psychiatrist Donald Pleasance (in an excellent performance) say that he looked in to the boy's eyes and saw Evil. I hardly consider that a learned psychiatric diagnosis, but it sure as hell takes the killer---and Carpenter---off the hook as far as logical, if insane, behavior goes.

The movie never exploits the fact that it's taking place on Halloween; none of the trappings of the holiday are used to any effect whatsoever. A couple of kids go by on the street dressed in costumes, there's a few jack-o-lanterns, and some scary movies on TV (cleverly-used clips from THE THING and FORBIDDEN PLANET), but that's it.

Carpenter has wasted a great title for a horror movie. Maybe Peter S. Beagle's wonderful original script TRICK OR TREAT can be filmed someday.

But HALLOWEEN is not without its merits. It's quite eerie some of the time, the midwest locale is well-recreated in South Pasadena, and the acting is good, but some of the shocks are predictable. Tension builds up tremendously by the end of the film; since there now have been plenty of pictures in which the bad guys win, the young heroine (Jamie Lee Curtis) might just get killed. The actual ending is a foolish fantasy, but there have been good shocks and excitement before that.

I'd sure as hell like to see Carpenter handle a script by someone else for a change. He's just too involved in movies (one cop is named Lee Brackett) to write them; instead of using elements from the movies he loves to bolster and inform his own views about the world, as Truffaut, Lucas, Scorsese and



others do, Carpenter instead has no apparent views about the real world---he never leaves the movie theatre. Like EYES OF LAURA MARS, HALLOWEEN is an American imitation of Italian psycho-thrillers which are already imitations of American films. Carpenter is almost literally too far from real life---which is a shame, because he's got talent.

LEONORA, directed by Juan Bunuel, the son of Luis, is a slow, handsome, moody drama set in the Middle Ages. Michel Piccoli's beautiful wife Liv Ullmann dies and he immediately marries a serf's daughter. Ten years later, his longing for Ullmann has become so great that he employs black magic to bring her back to life, then murders his younger wife when she won't leave his castle.

At first, Piccoli and Ullmann are happy, but eventually she begins killing children for sustenance (it isn't clear if she vampirizes or devours them).

The film is like a medieval ballad, and owes a great deal to THE SEVENTH SEAL, surely one of the most influential films. It's very slow, however, and only the most dedicated filmgoer will find it entertaining. I t isn't bad, it's just made in a mode that Americans usually don't enjoy.

PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK is directed by Peter Weiss, who also directed the impressive THE LAST WAVE, which I reported on earlier. This may be better; it's less obscure and perhaps Weiss was more sure of what he was getting at. However, I somewhat prefer THE LAST WAVE, I suppose simply because I prefer more overt fantasies.

HANGING ROCK is set in 1900 Australia, and is about the disappearance of three girls and their teacher during an outing to the rock of the title. This is apparently based on a true story, and has numerous elements that seem to confirm this. It's a beautiful film, one of the best-looking movies ever made, and I loved it.

It's slow, not paced like American films are, but that was no barrier to my enjoyment. There are haunting hints of fantasy throughout the film, and the musical score played on a wood flute is wonderful. The film reached inside me; I was shaking with emotion at the end, totally caught up in the story and characters. Weiss really has my number and I'll never miss a film he makes.

I loved PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK from the first moments, on Valentine's Day, as the girls (around 12-15) flutter about, talking of the valentines and the outing. Yet there's a mysterious, almost sinister undercurrent to many of these early scenes.

The film falls off somewhat after the recovery of one of the missing girls (she never recalls---or reveals---what happened), but comes back powerfully at the end. One scene, in which the recovered girl visits some of her schoolmates in the gym, is badly misjudged, but it doesn't hurt the overall film.

PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK seems now scheduled for some American release. If your taste runs to explicitly worked-out and resolved plots and lots of action, avoid it; otherwise, I think you'll like it.

I'm on a lot safer ground recommending THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL. Even though by now I would imagine everyone knows the basis of the plot, I can't count on that so I won't give it away. I assure you that it is science fiction.

A young American Jewish kid is in Paraguay spying on some old Nazis, and he tape-records a meeting conducted by Dr. Josef Mengele

(George Peck, no less) in which the Nazi scientist announces that the future of the Aryan race will be assured if a series of murders are carried out. His followers must kill 94 65-year-old men scattered all over Europe and North America. These men are all petty functionaries and all have young wives. None are Jewish.

Found out, the evildoer is killed, but by then he's managed to get word to an old Nazi fighter, Liebermann (Laurence Olivier), who lives in Vienna and seems to think he may be senile.

The film deals with Mengele's efforts to carry out his insane plan, while Liebermann tries to find out---then prevent---what's going on. What is going on is basically absurd, but director Franklin Schaffner (PATTON) brings such a sense of conviction and such a swift pace that you aren't really aware of the foolishness of the premise until the film quietly ends.

You'll hear plenty of comments that Peck is miscast, for this is his first truly villainous role. I thought he was quite satisfactory, if a little studied (he clearly has many thoughtfully planned ideas for playing old men: dyed hair, a stiff bearing, shrivelled eyes), and far from being miscast, I found this role to be similar to others he's played in the past. A traditional Peck character is one who is sure of himself against strong odds; he has some doubts, but his allegiance to a higher power buoys him, and he pursues his lonely path to the end. That's most of his main parts, including TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, his finest performance, and it's what he does here.

Of course, Olivier is marvelous; he's a realistic old man who is never merely loveable, who feels perhaps he's out of place in the modern world, but who springs back to action when needed. It's a warm, perfect performance. He's still the best.

The film is lots of fun, though ultimately silly; go see it.

WATERSHIP DOWN-----

The film is fine. It is both understanding concerning wild animals, and it is deeply human and wise. Most of the quality stems from the original story; Richard Adams has been brought to the screen in necessarily truncated form but with otherwise great fidelity. He should be proud. It is not as stunning as it might have been, given more time and greater artists, but it is still a very special film.

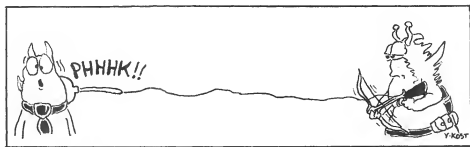
Avco-Embassy is releasing it in this country, and they might have

an uphill fight getting it to the right audiences. It's not raunchy, like FRITZ THE CAT and WIZARDS, so those who think an adult animated film equals "smut" are going to be turned away; it's not trendy and faddish, so those who were turned on by YELLOW SUBMARINE and the turgid METAMORPHOSES will probably not find much to their liking.

It's intelligent, well-written, touching, amusing, exciting and deeply moving. It is for children, in the sense that they will like it very much, but it is not made specifically for them. It is primarily for adults, but how to lure them into the theatre seems to me to be a genuinely serious problem. The novel's fame will help; I hope Avco uses a subdued ad campaign, emphasizing the basic realism of the story.

tion. He hired the late John Hubley to direct, but after a year of continuing disagreements, he was forced to fire Hubley and begin anew, with all-new character designs and voices. (Only two voices were retained of the original vocal cast) Rosen himself took over direction, as well as script and producer functions; he'd never directed a cartoon before, and apparently his unorthodox methods brought some disagreements.

But it was eventually made, after about \$5 million dollars in cost and over four years of production. The final credits: written, produced and directed by Martin Rosen; edited by Terry Rawlings; music by Angela Morley; animation director, Tony Guy; animation supervisor, Philip Duncan. Hubley's name doesn't appear anywhere, but I



Richard Adams' story about heroic rabbits in the English countryside seemed at first to be a miracle: a serious, richly-detailed story about animals never before treated on such a scale or with such humanity and insight. It was never thought of as a "mere" children's novel but was instead recognized as a work for adults; most didn't even know that it was an allegory of the British effort at ridding Europe of the Nazis. I certainly didn't. The very special flavor of the novel seemed impossible to capture in any other medium, especially film; after all, reading about bunny rabbits battling, killing and traveling in search of a new home, forming off alliances and having harrowing adventures seemed to be something best suited to the printed page. Literalizing something so fragile would make it seem absurd, many thought.

But the book was bought for filming by a well-intentioned, very serious filmmaker, Martin Rosen. (His only other credit I know of was as co-producer of WOMEN IN LOVE.) Rosen at first considered puppets, stop-motion animation, live rabbits and even men in rabbit suits, but dropped all that and returned to his first impulse, cartoon anima-

wouldn't be surprised to learn that the pre-credit sequence, the legend of El-Ahrirah, was influenced by him.

The novel was a major achievement. That the film is somewhat less than the novel is almost solely because themes like this have been treated in animation before. But the film is, by the end, magnificent. It's moving and warm, but not profound, which the novel almost was. It's the best animated cartoon ever made in England, but that's faint praise, because the only other feature of any quality made there was ANIMAL FARM. The film of WATERSHIP DOWN is simple in construction and not really a parable; it has the limitations that are inherent in the material, but it overcomes most of these.

We are accustomed to seeing animated animals do cute little things to mostly comic ends. So the opening sequence in WATERSHIP DOWN (the title is never explained, but the real Watership Down is used as a basis for the design) is perhaps misjudged. It's the story of how the rabbits' god, Frith the sun, gives El-Ahrirah, the arrogant prince of rabbits, enemies to kill him but also the cleverness and speed to outwit them. This is done in an almost African-primitive art

style; before their conversion to enemies, the other animals look like cookies. This gets the film off to a somewhat misleading start, but the realistic scenes that follow form a different basis almost immediately.

Nonetheless, when Hazel and his followers first threaten to kill another rabbit it comes as a distinct shock, for the first scenes seem almost comic, but now we realize that this is, in the context of this film, indeed possible. And before the film is over there are deaths among the rabbits. But significantly, no violent deaths occur to any of Hazel's followers. Bigwig comes near to death in the snare, and bleeds profusely, but he does not die. Hazel's moving death at the end is from old age; he simply shudders and dies. In the novel death did strike among Hazel's people, but realizing that for all his efforts at making an animated cartoon for adults as well as children, the main audience will still be kids, Martin Rosen softened the unpleasantness in the novel.

Because of the compression from the novel, some scenes are confusing. Why Hazel believes Fiver and wants to leave the old warren and how they manage to recruit other rabbits are unclear. The action occasionally moves in fits and starts, but the story steadily improves as it goes. The movement of the rabbits is especially convincing; real rabbit actions are cleverly interpolated to be used for characterization.

The art style is like that of a fine children's book; the backgrounds frequently reminded me of the cover illustrations for Ballantine's "Adult Fantasy" series. The rabbits are cleverly designed to seem believably rabbit and still have distinction in human terms to make them acceptable as individual characters. Size, movement and animalistic gestures are used well overall, but occasionally as in the case of the seemingly homosexual Cowslip, the man-fed rabbit, and the too-ugly General Woundwort, this is

overdone and they look like less acceptable realistic rabbits than cartoon characters.

The storyline, as I have said, has been vastly compressed, with many characters and incidents revised or eliminated. There are now three principal movements: the first escape culminating in the crossing of a river on a raft; the entrance to and escape from the man-fed warren; and the final freeing of some of Woundwort's imprisoned subjects and what follows. The last section is not only the longest and best in the film--the movie continually improves as it progresses, much as did the novel--but it could stand on its own as a short subject.

The vocal characterizations are largely excellent; as Hazel, John Hurt (replacing Julian Glover) uses no affectations whatsoever--he doesn't try to sound rabbit. The character is so fully realized that his death at the end is deeply moving and yet fully appropriate. Unlike Moses, he did live to reach his promised land. I would have liked to see a few more scenes at the end after the General's defeat. The other main characters: Fiver, Blackberry, Bigwig and the others simply vanish because of time limitations.

Rabbits are social creatures with a wide variety of complex instincts and behavior patterns so that the film is credible at all times; with perhaps the exception of befriending Kehaar the gull (Zero Mostell's voice), nothing the rabbits do in the film is beyond the capability of the real animals. Rabbits may not be intelligent, but it is easy in this context to believe they are.

A few sequences stand out as being especially well done; the climax is very exciting and well-timed, and Holly's memory of the destruction of the old warren is frightening.

However, Kehaar's sequences, though amusing, are not as sweeping or involving as they might be; Mostell's vocal characterization, further,

ermore, is almost untellable at times. Using a harsh, cawing voice plus what seems to be a Swedish accent may have been a mistake. Also, there's an overlong sequence in which Fiver searches for the wounded Hazel, over which a forgettable song sung by Art Garfunkle intrudes.

In a live-action feature it is easy to single out the elements of the film to praise: the camerawork, the direction, the set design, the acting, the special effects and so forth are easily discerned from within the whole. But an animated cartoon is much more of a piece; in a real sense it looks like it was all done by one person. That's the way it should be. I can, however, praise the score of Sngela Morley, for it is evocative, supportive, and largely unobtrusive.

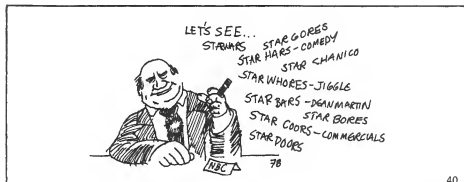
I think that despite a few defects, and the inevitable faint disappointment a person feels on seeing the film version, however good, of an especially well-liked book, the film is excellent and I hope it makes a lot of money. But I doubt that it will, because serious animated films are only just beginning to find a market. It's going to be a very tricky job making the film appealing to the right audience.

ALIEN THOUGHTS CONT. FROM P.13

'It might have made a difference if this book were clearly marked as the third in a series that share characters and plot incidents; then again, maybe it wouldn't; then again, what the hell. Anyway, for general information, UNDER A CALCULATING STAR winds up a story that starts with STARBRAT and continues with STARDRIFT (or NAIL DOWN THE STARS, if you read it in hardcover.) Now everyone knows.

'One bit of very good news': Those three books, plus my last adult sf novel, FROSTWORLD AND DREAMFIRE, are all going to be published in England this year and next year. Sidgwick and Jackson are doing UNDER A CALCULATING STAR and FROSTWORLD AND DREAMFIRE in hardback; New English Library are doing those two, plus STARBRAT and STARDRIFT, in paperback. So before very long I will be all over England, like smog.

'Gordon Dickson's explanation of his thoughts on a Neo-Puritan revolution were fascinating. I've been counting the straws in the wind, and it seems to me that we'll not only have the swingback, but perhaps have it sooner, and stronger, than any of us like to think.



For opners, let's see who gets nominated in 1980.

'That should give everyone plenty to worry about.'

*'Very good for me, anyway. Others may be able to take it casually.'

((I didn't like STARBRAT (which you no doubt recall I reviewed a few years ago) or UNDER A CALCULATING STAR because I don't much like juveniles. I recognize the need for very selective realism in that category, but I tend to reject the underlying premise: Children must be protected from the "awful" facts of life (not just sex facts of life) to preserve their precious innocence and to keep them "uncorrupted" for as long as possible.))

((But I'm happy for your success in having your books published in England; any man who can take the bad reviews I've given your work and still keep on subscribing is a very secure, mature person.))

much time as teaching did. I've let the deadline pass on a new novel about the humanoids -- working title, TEN TRILLION WISE MACHINES -- and have just agreed to write a new Legion of Space novel for Pocket Books.

'Which is all rewarding. Though I do miss students and classes, with the combined obligation and opportunity to read good literature and then to lead some kind of revealing discussion of it, I'm sure I'm going to be a lot happier in retirement than most retired people I know -- not many people can retire to science fiction.'

((Thanks for writing, Jack, and for the very good news that a new Humanoids novel is coming, and a Legion of Space novel. I still have vivid memories of the impact WITH FOLDED HANDS... ...AND SEARCHING MIND had on me way back when.))

LETTER FROM CHARLES SHEFFIELD

Sept. 1978

'Your comment in "The Human Hotline" of SFR #27 has a minor error in it. I serve as First Vice President of the American Astronautical Society, not the American Astronomical Society. It's not important to me, but perhaps the American Astronomical Society might be sensitive about the difference.

'In a month the information will need updating anyway, because I will then be President of the AAS. More to the point, perhaps, is the fact that that position, like my SF writing, is an avocation. The work that takes most of my time, and earns my living, is as a Vice President of Earth Satellite Corporation, and it is in that role that I am best described.

'As usual, Issue #27 was unput-downable, and Alexis Gilliland especially is sick in the head in just the way that I am -- his cartoons are great. How about some coverage of the magazines soon? I'd rather see that than interviews, which are a 50-50 proposition. And how about limiting Book Reviews to a single column each? (Each book, I mean, not each issue!) Longer reviews invariably get off the point of the book, and onto other reviewers' hobby-horses.'

((Thanks for the correction in re your officership in the American Astrological Society. We try to be accurate and reliable.))

((Orson Scott Card will be doing a column starting next issue in which he reviews/appreciates those stories in the magazines he thinks are superior. A better idea, I think, than trying to mention or encapsulate all the stories in a given issue or issue.))
((I encourage book reviewers to be brief, but they always seem to have good reasons for longer commentaries.))

LETTER FROM RON GOULART

Sept. 1978

'In re the letter you tossed into #27 of SFR.

'Gad, sir!

'I am not now nor never have been Rod Gray.

'I have my code after all, and not writing about somebody called the Lady from LUST is high on the list.

'I've already refuted this suggestion in a couple of fanzines already. Is it going to haunt me forever? Will it be believed by the same people who think Jack Vance is a penname of Henry Kuttner?

'Also. I have never written as Jose Silvera, Max Kearny, Ben Johnson or John Easy. These are all names of characters in my books.

'Why do you listen to people who can't tell the authors from their characters?

'I'll be happy to send you a complete list of all my pennames. You have but to ask.

'By the way, there never was a Kenneth Robeson. That always was a house name.'

((Apologies. Thanks for writing to correct misinformation. I tend to trust bibliographic info sent in by fans, but... From now on I'll require chapter and verse. And Lee Smith has some explaining to do.))

LETTER FROM GIL LAMONT

Sept. 1978

'Just a quick note after an even quicker perusal of the new SFR. Robert Whitaker is not quite correct on his Ted Sturgeon/Ellery Queen info. THE PLAYER ON THE OTHER SIDE was published in paperback in 1965 by Pocket Books; the Ballantine edition was more like 1975. I, too, have heard the rumor that Avram Davidson wrote one or two El-

LETTER FROM STEVE PERRY

Sept. 1978

'E.J. Gold (son of H.L. Gold) and his wife Cybele (she's the editor) have started a new magazine, WINGS, a bi-monthly dedicated to "Consciousness, Science and the Arts". They're looking for short fiction.

'Cybele wants quality SF -- but you'd better try to get a copy of the magazine to see where they're at, first. That address is:

'WINGS POB 370
Nevada City, CA 95959'

LETTER FROM JACK WILLIAMSON, PRES.
SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS OF AMERICA

Sept. 27, 1978

'This is mainly to say that I still appreciate SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. (I'm delighted with the readable type-size and fine paper in #27, as well as with the contents.)

'Every time I get a new issue, I spend more time with it than I feel that I really have, and feel an impulse to write an enthusiastic loc -- but, like a lot of other good resolutions, that seldom or never gets carried through.

'I've been retired from teaching more than a year, and I had hoped to have an abundance of time for all that didn't get done before. But SFWA seems to take up nearly as

lery Queens, and Jack Vance is also rumored to have done a few. Seeing as how Paul Fairman's obituary credited him with having written Ellery Queen's A STUDY IN TERROR, it makes one wonder just how many of the novels were written by other people. No Sturgeon bibliography is complete without mentioning the three westerns: THE KING AND FOUR QUEENS, THE RARE BREED (both novelizations from movies), and STURGEON'S WEST (a collection of western stories, some with Don Ward, published only in hardcover). Perhaps I'm merely being retentive.

'Lee Smith is close on the Ron Goulart info, but is in error regarding Kenneth Robeson being "a real writer in the 30s who wrote the original Avenger novels". Kenneth Robeson was of course a house pseudonym of Street and Smith, mostly used by Lester Dent for Doc Savage. So far as I know the original Avenger novels were written in the main by Paul Ernst. Of the Goulart Avenger novels, THE CARTOON CRIMES tells all in a cipher message.

'Now that we know Ron Goulart wrote #s 2 and 3 of Howard Lee's KUNG FU novels, and Barry Malzberg wrote the first, who wrote number 4? After all, isn't that what bibliography is all about, tracking down the writers behind these elusive pen names?

'Hmm. Pseudonyms are probably worth an entire Trivia Bowl to themselves... if the judges can agree on an answer.'

LETTER FROM DENNIS LIEN

Sept. 1978

'Mark Mansell's statement that BLOOD! is the "first record to be nominated in the dramatic category" for a Hugo is, of course, flatly wrong. Both BLOWS AGAINST THE EMPIRE (sounds a bit like a Geis porno novel) and DON'T CRUSH THAT DWARF, HAND ME THE PLIERS (by Jefferson Starship and the Firesign Theatre, respectively) were nominated for a 1971 Hugo, and I THINK WE'RE ALL BOZOS ON THIS BUS, by the Firesign Theatre again, for a 1972 Hugo. This last finished fifth and last; my vague memory of the 1971 awards is that DWARF finished second to No Award. (Also, PRESERVATION by the Kinks was nominated (but not short-listed) for a 1974 Nebula, and the same thing happened to five albums for the 1975 Nebula and two for the 1976 Nebula, except that one of the last -- HARLAN! HARLAN ELLISON READS HARLAN ELLISON -- did make the final ballot.) '

LETTER FROM JOHN STRICKLAND

Sept., 1978

'By now, you've seen BATTLESTAR GALACTICA and so do not need a review from Canada, but the movie version differed from the TV version in a couple of ways, and I thought you might like to know the differences:

'1. The TV version was about a half hour longer than the movie. This makes the TV version the more preferable, as it detailed the characters more completely, and filled in a lot of background. For example, we didn't know that Adama was holding his pilots in reserve when the Cylons were planning to trap the refugees during the awards ceremony, until the very last minute.

'2. In the movie, John Colicos was killed by the Cylons for his failure to capture Lorne Green and company.

'3. In the movie, Starbuck and the "Social Leader" were in fact sans clothing when discovered by Adama's daughter in the fighter Bay. In the TV version, they were fully clothed and engaged in that quaint pre-pubescent pastime called "necking". Thus we become the victims of prime-time programming.'

((Thanks for the "movie" info on GALACTICA. I've about given up on the TV series. The only way the writers seem able to start an episode is to have one or more of the scout/fighters disobey orders, ignore basic military procedures, and do something stupid that would in any military force in the world result in dismissal or summary court martial. And I note that Lorne Green is being reduced to hand-wringing and shorter and shorter scenes.

((And another thing---John Colicos sitting up on that pedestal throne---does he sleep, eat, and defeat up there? Is that throne actually a toilet?

((I suspect I've seen all there is to see from GALACTICA. In last Sunday's episode we were treated to a "western"...and STAR TREK did it first. Then SPACE:1999 did it...and.....

((GALACTICA is foundering already on the shoals of its writers' lack of imagination and its producers' willingness to allow gross errors of science and plausibility in the series. The pattern of Juvenile Crap is set and the show will sink slowly in the ratings until cancelled.))

LETTER FROM HERITAGE PRESS, INC.

DSC '78 REPORT

'The Phoenix Award was given to Karl Edward Wagner, and the Rebel Award to Don Markstein. Also at the banquet, the arts awards were presented by one of the judges, George Scithers. Other judges were Vincent DiFate, Michael Goodwin, and Sandra Meisel (no judges were allowed to win awards). The arts awards were given as follows:

BEST ASTRONOMICAL PRINTING:

Winner: Green Hills of Earth by Kelly Freas
Runner Up: Moon of Mutiny by Dean Ellis

BEST SCIENCE FICTION:

Winner: DRAGONFLIGHT by Michael Whelan
Runner Up: ALL FLESH IS GRASS by Richard Powers

BEST HUMOR:

Winner: SHIP OF FOOLS by Bob Maurus
Runner Up: ANOTHER FINE MYTH by Kelly Freas

BEST FANTASY:

Winner: Endpapers from SOWERS OF THUNDER by Roy G. Krenkel
Runner Up: STORMBRINGER by Michael Whelan

'A special award was given to Kelly and Polly Freas for their undying support and help with the 1978 DSC and was etched: To Polly and Kelly Freas -- Who Can Do Anything.'

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER

Sept. 16, 1978

'I gather the Moorcock letter in #27 is written in response to my letter in #25, not that in #26, in which I admitted some of the things I said about UNEARTH were tactless. I have nothing against UNEARTH. If they can bring new writers in, more power to them. I read the magazine. I find the features interesting. Some of the fiction is quite good, which makes me wonder why it wasn't sent to big magazines first.

'It seems to me that unless a writer has a particular loyalty to an editor (i.e. the editor discovered him, as John Campbell did for so many), he or she will submit a story to the highest paying magazine first, assuming that magazine observes basic courtesies, pays on time, and otherwise behaves itself. I don't think many people in our field mind appearing in PLAYBOY, where they get as much for a short story as many people get for a novel. Sometimes a lot more. Ultimately the work stands on its own

CANNED MEAT

a science fiction novel

RICHARD E. GEIS

COVERS AND INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRUCE CONKLIN



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PICTURED ABOVE IS THE INSIDE TITLE PAGE. THE WRAPAROUND COVER ON HEAVY STOCK IS
AT THE PRINTER AND NOT AVAILABLE FOR THIS AD. IT SHOWS, FULL-SIZE, THE ILLUSTRATION
ABOVE AND ITS COMPANION.

merit, not merely appeared, and if a short story is to have any life at all, it will be reprinted from the original source, and read mostly in reprints (anthologies and one author collections), and the original source won't count. If it is not reprinted, nothing counts.

'ASIMOV'S buys more than first North American serial rights (although this is negotiable) and pays for them. Lately we've come up with a series of very thin pamphlet reprints, about 10,000 words per volume, to be distributed through supermarkets. This in addition to the Dale Books alphabetical series, and the new Davis ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF ANTHOLOGY, which is rather like what they do for ELLERY QUEEN's once a year. Every time the story is reprinted, the author is paid again. When artwork is re-used, the artist is paid again. (And he got his original back.) So you can make a lot more than what you got from the initial sale, and this does not inhibit your use of the same story in a collection or a Best of the Year Anthology.

'All authors get to proofread their own work. Galley are sent out from New York as soon as the story is set in type. As for the author choosing the illustrator, this just isn't possible with a frequent magazine. The editor has to find an illustrator who (1) is capable (2) is willing and not overly committed elsewhere (3) is reliable. You have no idea how things can be screwed up if an artist doesn't deliver on time. Unillustrated backlog is tied up, and cannot be used as issues are being made up.

'Also I might mention that response time is very fast. Many manuscripts are in and out the same day, and some are bought almost that fast, although something which is not an obvious must, on which there are several opinions, may take a week or two.

'These are basic courtesies which I would expect from any magazine. In my experience ANALOG is exemplary. F&SF is slow on response sometimes, but no real problem. (If you write to Ferman asking where the story is you sent three months before, he will respond.)

'As for encouraging new authors, the current ASIMOV'S (Sept-Oct) has four first sales in it, and one of them is featured on the cover with a Michael Whalen painting. You can't get more encouraging than that. (Four debuts in a single issue is actually down from our record of seven in the March-April issue.) Of those in the current issue, I'd say Anne Lear is the most promising. A real find.

'By the way, another one of our discoveries, Barry Longyear, has sold enough to just us to make a living, and this is before his first story has even been published! Virtually all of them are novelets, and there are something like nine of them so far. If you figure that out against what we pay, you'll see what I mean. Who says short fiction is no longer a commercial proposition? Longyear clearly has quite a career ahead of him.

'I just sold my fantasy novel, THE WHITE ISLE to Borgo Press. It will be published in a couple years. I will make less than one would get for a short story in PLAYBOY, but then there are not many markets for short fantasy novels (about 50,000) which are not derivative of either Howard or Tolkien. I wrote the thing to see if I could write a novel (as I had never gotten beyond 10,000 words before) and if I could sell it. I had a great fear of having wasted all that time, and this discouraged me from trying again until the first attempt sold. Now I may consider another one, although I still seem to be essentially a short story writer, most comfortable at about 6000 words.'

LETTER FROM FRED PATTEN

July, 1978

'STAR WARS opened in Japan last month, and it seems to have had the traumatic effect that was predicted, judging by the book and magazine spinoffs that are just now reaching the Los Angeles newsstands. Some of these are decidedly weird, especially the pornographic comic book versions. Here are some sample photocopies, ranging from kids' editions to one of the softer-core depictions from a mens' magazine. (There are considerably harder-core works. Craig Miller, who works for George Lucas' publicity department, says that the office went into culture shock when they received the file copies the Japanese publisher sent them.) Some of the juvenile books are about 1/3 STAR WARS and 2/3 other SF movies, including lots of color reproductions of stills and posters from U.S. and Japanese "sci-fi" epics. One illustrated checklist of robots and/or artificial beings has most of what you'd expect -- Robby from FORBIDDEN PLANET, Gort from THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, the Daleks from DR. WHO, the Yul Brynner gunslinger from WESTWORLD, HOLMES and YOWO -- but also the Tin Woodman from the WIZARD OF OZ and Disney's PINOCCHIO. It's certainly a change from the usual newsstand fare.'

LETTER FROM RICH BARTUCCI, D.O.
July 28, 1978

'I read Arne C. Eastman's letter in SFR #26 and paused to shudder. That line of his -- "If I could only bypass the physicians' total access to the USP me and my PDR and my Merck manual would do us fine." Omigawd... The voice of blissful, deadly ignorance, of cocksure arrogance, of... Aw, what the fuck am I worried about; they'll either bring him in DOA or he'll kill somebody else and that'll be that. I just hope that I'm not the doc who has to revive the poor slob should he be wheeled into the ER someday. The job'll be long, sloppy and probably pointless; he'll just go out and do it again.

'To tackle his "negative experiences" point by point would do nothing to convince Mr. Eastman, but it might help other readers who feel that the sum total of materia medica is contained in the PDR, that big book we in the trade refer to as "The Sears Catalog of Pharmacology".'

'First, hemorrhoids often do clear up spontaneously. The surgeon Eastman may have spoken to might have been overzealous. The Book (and I don't mean the PDR) stipulates that emollients and stool softeners and sitz baths should be tried first; surgeons don't always stick with such conservative approaches. Eastman might have done better if he'd visited a GP or one of the MD's "Family Practitioners".'

'Second, yogurt, if a live culture, might well have put paid to Mr. Eastman's wife's Trichomonis infection -- but I'd like to see how yogurt could clear up the Trichomonis urethritis he probably had. The condition's silent in males, frequently, and it's possible for hubby to re-infect his chatelaine.

'Third, a dermatitis (which is what I assume he had when they offered him a topical corticosteroid cream or ointment) can frequently be due to skin contact with irritants (contact dermatitis), drug reactions (erythema multiforme is an example), or emotional instability (lichen planus, f'rinstance). With these conditions judicious applications of "tincture of time" can be best, but topical anti-inflammatory agents (like corticosteroids) are often used to reduce the pain and itching. Systemic antipruritics and tranquilizers (hydroxyzine is handy) are also commonly used. Eastman might have disposed of the

ALIEN THOUGHTS CONTINUED ON P. 63

ONE IMMORTAL MAN

A SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

BY RICHARD E. GEIS

SYNOPSIS

VIK KUNZAR, the immortal man, has lived through the horrible Bio-War of 2205 that devastated America, Europe, and most of Asia.

He was a king for generations in the savagery and ruins of Europe, as a new ice-age swiftly brought terrible cold and forced the new barbarians southward....

Moving ahead of the human tide, in the 27th century, he triggered one last resurgence of science and technology in Egypt and caused to be planted a new, wondrous ecology of genetically altered and mutated plants and animals in the heart of Africa, in the Congo.

When the white savages finally overran Egypt, Vik became a black and journeyed south to live in his new world.

Now, 500 years later, in the 32nd century, the whites are pressing south from the Sahara, seeking their god—a man they call Kun-Zar, whom legend says is immortal and whom their priests say will be their king of kings again and make them forever the favored people on Earth.

Vik has changed as the centuries have slipped past. He is now ever more devoted to sex and danger and the subtle manipulation of people and events.

Yet, for all of his self-indulgence, he has a compulsion to maintain learning and culture, to keep civilization from being extinguished.

As ONE IMMORTAL MAN began he was known as Mastil, Emperor Ndola's First Minister....and secret ruler of the empire through vast commercial and banking power.

Computer-run sensor devices—secret remnants of 22nd century technology—alerted him to danger as he was enjoying a tryst with the young and beautiful Empress Ponta. Someone was disturbing his medical re-

cords at the estate-tree of his doctor.

Vik sent Ponta back to the palace trees and set off alone to investigate. He found two of Defense Minister Quebo's agents torturing the doctor for information about him. He killed the two and regretfully killed the doctor. He returned home unseen. Another alarm told him other agents were investigating his faked birth records in Nubia.

Obviously Emperor Ndola, dying of cancer, hopes that "Mastil" is the immortal man—and can be made to give up the secret.

The following day in the gargantuan palace trees Vik had a meeting with Ndola and Quebo. Ndola offered Vik a visit by his Chinese girl who specialized in mouth love.

On the way home that afternoon, Vik and his party were attacked by disguised agents and Vik was deliberately wounded in the thigh.

He made it to his huge tree estate but was confined to bed. The Emperor's private doctor arrived and helped treat the wound while covertly testing Vik for signs of his true age.

The Chinese girl arrived later and also in her fashion tested him. Finally, she paralyzed him by injecting a drug hidden in a hollow tooth.

Signalled by the girl, the army attacked Vik's estate and took him prisoner.

He awakened in the army prison on the palace grounds. He was visited by Defense Minister Quebo and the doctor and three guards.

Using self-hypnosis, Vik lulled them into thinking him still paralyzed. At the right moment he attacked, killed the guards, and by holding Quebo and the doctor hostage, escaped unobserved into the underground sewer vines that serve the city of giant trees.

In the huge main sewer vine Vik encountered a young man and woman who were fugitives hiding in the sewer system. He took their boat and forced the girl, Const, to accompany him on the trip down-sewer to the Congo river.

She cooperated and helped him get past clusters of other criminals and fugitives who live in the main sewer.

Vik decided to pose as a discharged army veteran with a young wife. Once free of the sewer he and Const found temporary refuge in a small community of lower-class people who live in large hollowed gourds which have a designed ecology suitable for human use.

After one day, Vik and Const abruptly boated farther along the Congo to another bulbous cluster. Const didn't like the constant moving



CONKLIN • 72

and, knowing he was Masil, seduced by the huge promised reward, betrayed him to the authorities.

Vik, ever suspicious and cautious, escaped from the sudden night raid by the army and killed many soldiers during a water chase.

During a trek through the jungle to a distant farm he owns he came too close to a squad of searching army troops and was sensed by a feared Howler--an incredibly fast and vicious tracking animal with a paralyzing bite.

Vik succeeded in luring the beast to its death. He was still suffering from the thigh wound and could not travel or fight well.

He stumbled on a soldier alone and was forced by circumstances to kill the man. The man was a Nubian and Vik took his uniform, pack and weapons. He changed the identity disc and became a discharged veteran of the army.

Several days later his thigh wound scar was minimal. He risked travel on a commercial path in the jungle. Almost immediately he encountered another army squad and was accepted as ex-army, fed, and given a ride.

At a guarded bridge his identity was checked by a wary officer, but let pass. That evening he took food and departed...on his way to his farm still three days walk distant.

At his farm Vik succeeded in establishing himself as Masil and sent messengers to his associates and agents, to his managers in and around Kinshasa, and to Empress Ponia, telling them to come to him, to bring gold and supplies, arms and men.

Vik planned a coup against Ndola and Quebo.

However, the odds were against him; traitors in his forces tried to assassinate him by fire late one night while he was with Ponia in his high tree rooms. Vik and Ponia escaped the fiery death, but one or two of the assassins managed to get away.

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Six days later Gitega entered the farm office with a thick sheaf of report leaves in his hand. His intense, pained expression signaled urgency.

Vik dismissed Deba and the lower echelon supervisors. He gestured for Gitega to walk with him out-

side. Every wall was expected to have ears.

As they passed the nearby, hastily-built barracks, Vik asked, "What's the problem?" He walked slowly. Gitega limped badly from a severe arthritic hip.

"I've just had runners from surrounding early-warning nests. Army units are converging on us. Thousands of men. Quebo knows you and we are here and is throwing everything he has as quickly as he can, to lock us up."

Vik stopped. "It's only been a ten-day. We don't have enough--"

"My estimate now is at least six thousand men against us in attack position within two days."

"And we have sixteen hundred men at root." Vik took a deep, sighing breath. "How soon will they link up and make escape difficult or impossible?"

"Maybe tomorrow night. Some of the forces are raw. Most are battle-hardened reserve, though."

"How many men of ours are inside this net, coming in?"

"Maybe two hundred with supplies."

"Why is he moving so fast?"

Gitega sat on a bench of killed wood. Inside the nearby barracks soldiers laughed, gambled, and played tonk. "Ndola has ordered him. And he probably thinks you have a great war treasure here. Ndola wants you. Quebo wants your gold...and you. You have made him a joke. He's had six men played alive for telling Quebo jokes."

Vik stood looking off across the wedge-shaped arrow fields. "Any word from the provinces?"

"It's too soon. Now...it's unlikely runners will get through to us. We needed a month at least to mount a force and link allies."

"And Quebo knows this, too. He's nipping us in the bud."

Gitega bowed his head.

Vik said, "So we strike first -- hit the army now, fast and hard by surprise -- or we disappear and forget the coup."

"Masil, we could move further south. To the Uige...to Lunda, and there begin again."

"We'd run out of money and people by then. We'd have a few hundred die-hards, and we'd be prey to the local chiefs. We wouldn't last a year."

Gitega said, "Our forces are dung. We cannot meld these small

groups of guards and company soldiers into a coherent, disciplined attack force. They are too much loyal to their personal leaders. Those leaders are jealous of position and power. They will not even follow you very far, for very long. They are at root mercenaries."

Vik agreed. "That stupid lion-fucker. He's disrupted commerce, finance, transport and supply for the empire. The whites will run in the streets of Kinshasa within two years."

Gitega said nothing. He shifted painfully.

Vik tasted bile from his stomach. He wanted to kill! Four hundred years of careful work and manipulation...Four hundred years of funding museums and libraries and universities... All lost because of one or two incredibly selfish, desperate, irresponsible men.

Yes, and count himself with them. He had been sloppy, careless, and blind. Too busy playing with Ponia and Melindi and Jamama... and hundreds of other sweet young women whose names he could not recall. Too much playing with gold and power and not enough long view. Not enough thought about cutting down Quebo sooner. Not enough analysis of Ndola's character. Too much contempt for them -- all of them... the mortals.

Vik said, "All right. We disband. Save yourself, Gitega. Pass the word to the others. You are free to leave in any direction."

"As the great Masil wishes."

"Thank you for all you've done. I'll see you before you leave." Vik walked back to the tree. He climbed the ramps to his private quarters. He didn't bother to limp as Masil would have limped.

He was going to slip away tonight. Alone. He faced a long trek through central Africa to Lake Tanganyika, Lake Victoria, and then to the Indian Ocean.

India was the ultimate destination. But it was a poor place to seek. The last reports he had received told of the continuing breakdown of the ancient Indian culture in the face of hordes from the north. Madras was swarming with refugees and Sri Lanka was unable to avoid desperate thousands of boatloads of starving people.

He smiled ruefully as he approached his door. He wished there was a way to turn himself back to white. But that technology died with the Egyptians and in the memory banks of his computer.

Maybe his skin would lighten

naturally after another thousand years or so.

He entered his tree rooms and sank onto the new sponge bed. The room made faint growing sounds. The new room was still sealing itself to the limb, and the carpet was too thick and young.

The former, burned and baked room had been cut free of the tree, Ibva salve had been applied to the limb's wounds, and the new, living room had been hoisted up and joined with the special cement excreted by the Natats shrub, part of the interlocked ecology of the area developed and fine-tuned by the Egyptians hundreds of years ago.

Vik felt tired. Too many conferences, too many late night strategy sessions, too many pleasures with Punia. He set his mental clock to awaken him after an hour of rest.

He yawned, relaxed, cleared his mind, and sank into a deep sleep.

He awakened when Salina entered the room. She carried a claw-tined carpet rake.

She looked up and a smile trembled into something like fear and awe. "G-great Masil. I will finish cleaning when you wish."

"Salina, what's the matter?" He left the bed.

She shrank away. She bowed her head and showed her palms. She began to tremble. She edged sideways toward the door.

"What's the matter with you? Stop!"

She stood, shaking. The rake fell to the carpet.

"Why are you afraid of me?" Vik took her into his arms. She mewled with fear, then melted against him. She wept. "The -- the drums... a few minutes ago... they say you are K-Kun-Zar. You are the whites' god!"

Vik closed his eyes. He released her and went to the windows. Far below in the farm yard, along the barracks, soldiers and farm workers darted and clotted, talking quickly and excitedly.

He saw Gulu puffing up the ramp to his level.

Vik turned and smiled at Salina. He laughed. "I am not Kun-Zar. This skin is not stained black, as you should know. No stain could survive the juices of a yoni for long."

"The drums...."

"The drums say what Ndola wants them to say. He is trying to split my forces with wormvine stories.

It is a tactic. Go downstre and tell everyone the truth." He caressed her lovely breasts briefly, kissed her, and sent her out of the room as Gulu entered.

Vik said, "I know about the drums."

The fat man slumped, puffing, into a bladder chair. It sighed deeply from his weight. He wiped his sweaty face. "The drums are a minor annoyance compared to what I have just learned from a lion-runner."

"I suppose Quebo's forces are closing in faster than expected."

Gulu chuckled. He took a handful of Squala nuts from a pocket of his robe. He munched and said, "If we ran now we might not make it. They stripped Kinshasa of every lion able to run and have run them to us, each with a veteran on its back. Some with supplies. They have us now. A thin net, but with Chad veterans...."

"How many?"

"Maybe two thousand in the first wave. More thousands forces running on foot."

"Two thousand makes a thin net for fifteen hundred desperate fighters."

"Yes, if we go within a few hours."

"I told Gitega to tell the commanders and others they are free to leave. The story on the drumline will speed their preparations. It's pointless now to try to knock down that Kun-Zar story."

Vik paused and smiled wryly. "I hope you make it to Gabon. I hope you die in bed of overeating."

Gulu smiled. "And I hope you never die...Masil. That is, until you want to. The way things are going you may end up the last man on this dung ball, or may be forced to live as a black among cave-living whites."

"Who knows what awaits?"

As Gulu struggled to his feet, Vik said, "A favor. Would you take Punia with you?"

"Of course."

"I'm going down now to tell her and say goodbye." Vik clasped Gulu's hand, then left the rooms.

As he started down the ramp to Punia's quarters lower in the tree, he noted even more activity below. The news had been spread, no doubt by the lion-runner who had reported first to Gulu.

Vik remembered an old saying: bad news has a thousand voices.

When he reached the massive limb that hosted Punia's three rooms, he found the door ajar.

Inside, he found Sese, Punia's black woman servant, packing their few possessions into a lionhide bag. She looked up, her eyes widened, and she quickly bowed her head. "Great Masil."

"Empress Punia?"

"In the bath, Great Masil."

Vik nodded. "Sese, Ndola's forces are closing in on us faster than we expected. We are abandoning the farm, and abandoning the attempt to overthrow the government. I have asked Gulu to take you and Punia with him to his estates in Gabon. You'll be safe there as long as you live. I want you to go to his commanders and make arrangements for a place on a wagon for Punia and yourself. Gulu will be coming down the tree in a minute and you can speak to him if need be."

The woman nodded. "Yes, great Masil. Thank you."

"Go now, and make the arrangements."

She showed her palms and left the room.

Vik opened the bath door and entered a perfumed, steamy atmosphere. Punia lay in the tub, eyes closed, hands idly playing in the hot, soapy water.

He stood watching her for a few seconds, appreciating for the thousandth time the near perfection of her slim little body. He considered one last lovemaking with her, but there wasn't time. And what he had to tell her would make sex impossible.

He came forward and knelt beside the tub.

She perhaps sensed his presence -- a tiny sound, a waft of air... She opened her eyes and sat up quickly, sloshing the water. "Masil ---" She smiled and settled back. "I was daydreaming and you startled me."

"What was the dream?"

She reached for his hand and guided it to her naked breasts. "That I was ruling Empress and you plan for me. I want a gold tub in the tallest palace tree, and I want a hundred servants, each trained to do a different thing for me, to be perfect in that one thing. A servant to do my hair one way and do it better than anyone, ever. And another servant to do my fingernails just perfect. And one to dress me. And one who is just like me in size and in blood to wear my robes --

left. He heard what sounded like two or three squads of soldiers approach ing.

But the behind-the-lines jungle was too full of army. He was leaping across a narrow path when he was seen by the point man of a reinforcing patrol, independent of the reserve squad.

The man had a deep, far-carrying voice: "KUN-ZAR! KUN-ZAR! There! I follow him!"

Vik turned right to pass the patrol, and used all his coordination and skills to increase his speed through the black raw jungle.

To his surprise the soldier with the booming voice stayed close. After a frantic-paced half-minute Vik realized they were both losing contact with the squad and patrol.

The Howler was of course nearer, racing like lightning across the arrow fields. It would be in the jungle in a few seconds. That would slow it, but not by much. There had to be a squad following the beast from the farm.

Vik abruptly stopped and stepped one stride to the left behind a tree. When the still-shouting soldier plunged abreast of him, Vik swished the long sword around low to meet him.

The soldier had been running as Vik had run -- crouched, bobbing, weaving, leaping... The keen-edged heavy blade took him in the forehead. The impact sent a shock up Vik's arm. The sword was wedged tight in the man's skull and was nearly pulled from Vik's grip as the body plunged forward to the soft, moist jungle ground.

With the Howler's screaming ever nearer, Vik wrenched and pulled at the sword, finally levering it out of the vise-like broken skull.

Vik plunged away at his best speed, seeking a clearing. After a moment he ran into a small glade big enough for his purpose. He stopped, breathing heavily, put down his shield, and waited for the Howler.

He was grateful for the rest. He was sweating and stinking inside his thick hide armor.

He readied his bolt gun. The spring tension was near its limit. The bolt looked true. All he had to do was get in a perfect shot against a vicious, lightning-fast animal in near total darkness within a split second of seeing the beast.

Not very likely. He looked closely at the jungle around him. He moved right a meter.

He lessened the spring tension and clipped the gun back onto his belt. He took up the heavy shield and crouched low behind it.

He heard what sounded like two or three squads of soldiers approach ing.

The Howler was shrieking now, sensing the nearness of its prey from the freshness of the scent.

Vik burrowed his hand under the mean branches of a Zawi thorn bush and pulled it out by the roots. The Howler was going to get its precious nose bloodied.

Five seconds later the Howler shot into the tiny clearing, saw and smelled Vik, and leaped, jaws wide, eager to inject its paralyzing venom.

Vik met it with his shield. The beast wailed as it bounced off. It spun in the air and as soon as it landed bunched and launched itself at him again, mindlessly ferocious.

This time he had the viciously thorned bush in its path. The Howler yowled and fell to the ground, confused for a brief time by its pain and by the scent of its own blood in its intensely delicate nostrils.

Vik pinned it to the ground with the heavy shield, then crushed it with his full weight.

The unnerving Howler scream was gone, but in its place was the clatter and yelling of terribly near, converging capture squads.

Vik rose and melted into the undergrowth. But only a dozen meters away a squad was spreading wide, two and three men deep, and the jungle was being lit by dozens of glowleaves. Another squad -- the one from the farm -- was nearing, its lights bobbing and dancing in the hands of running, shouting men.

They thought they had him. A signal horn blared, calling more reserves.

Vik knew he had to break through the encircling chain of soldiers. Find the weak link. Create a weak link.

He drew his bolt gun, tightening the spring to maximum, and spotted the officer of the nearest squad. He froze next to a thick, intricately boled Ravuma tree. He aimed...and waited.

He noted their weapons: dart guns, nets, short spears, daggers. Undoubtedly the darts were tipped with Howler venom, to paralyze him. He didn't know if his thick hide armor would stop a dart's penetration or not.

The glowleaves created intricately weaving colored shadows. The

nearest soldiers were as little as three meters away, oblivious to him, when his gun fired -- thung! -- and the bolt buried itself in the squad leader's left bicep and ribs, pinning his arm.

The man spun down, his cry almost lost in the babble and noise. But there formed a clot of men around him, more shouting. Soldiers turned to look--

Vik had dropped his gun and pulled his long sword the instant the nearest soldiers looked away. He attacked.

He had a tremendous advantage: he was fighting to wound and escape, they were under orders to capture.

He surged from the fluttering shadows like a giant black demon from a soldier's worst battle nightmare. In an instant he had thrust and slashed and battered his way past the three nearest soldiers. One clutched an opened thigh, another reeled away with a half-severed right arm. The third was flat on his back, stunned by a backhanded head blow from the butt of Vik's sword handle.

Yet a close-by soldier got off a dart shot.

Vik felt the dart slap against his covered shoulder and felt no sting. He had no time to be grateful. Other soldiers spotted him and the cry went up. He veered and veered and ducked and used shrubs, vines, trees, even other soldiers as shields from a wild volley of criss-crossing darts.

The second in command shouted orders. The veterans cooled and chased. Glowleaves still surrounded him as Vik ran. A net hissed into the air toward him but was snagged by a tree limb.

Vik turned right abruptly and slashed a man down, then left to avoid a sailing net and to gut-thrust that man. He left a trail of wounded, yet the squad pursued and kept contact, and ahead second reserve squads were sent to intercept him.

The orders changed after ten minutes of this deadly chase. Vik was panting, sweating rivers, but untouched. His pursuers were gasping, almost spent. He heard the cry, "THROW FOR HIS LEGS! WOULD HIM! AIM LOW!"

The orders were echoed, shouted desperately forward.

Vik plunged abruptly into a vast field -- another farm! He was terribly vulnerable in this emptiness. There was a moon, now, and he could easily be seen.

Dozens of soldiers spilled from the jungle behind him. A glad

cy went up. The fastest of them began to gain on him. A spear thunked into the bare ground next to his foot as he labored into a lurching sprint.

A young, lean, very fast soldier almost got within six meters. Vik heard his swift feet and lunged sharply left---

--but took a short awkward spear throw in the right calf. The point reached bone and then the spear worked free as he kept running. But he limped, and blood flowed down his leg.

Vik damped the pain and angled around to reach the jungle. He threw his heavy shield backward at the speedy soldier and caused the youth to sprawl.

A cluster of soldiers ran to cut him off. They would succeed. They had the angle on him. Spears narrowly missed him. One took him in the left arm but left only a deep scratch. Vik abruptly cut left to pass behind the main body, but in the path of three stragglers.

The three shouted and readied guns and spears. Another instant---

He lunged left again at the last instant and bowled into them, slashing with his bloody sword. A surprised soldier went down and accidentally shot Vik at close range with a dart. It stung deep into his right underarm.

Then he was through them, into the welcome jungle, to face another four men with nets and darts and spears.

The accidental dart hung in his armpit, gouging him as he fought, sending its poison into his body.

He cut past the soldiers, barely escaping a net that slid off his head and arm, suffering another spear wound, this time in his left thigh. Deep. Bloody. He pulled the dart from his flesh.

Vik staggered on, trailing blood, uncaring, savage, killing, working deeper into the raw wilderness. Meeting fewer soldiers. But knowing another Howler was going to come after him. Probably many Howlers.

He instinctively sought the densest jungle. He forced his body at top speed, forced his mind to stop the blood flow, to mute the pain.

He plunged on until he lost pursuit. But the army horns blew signals. The army drums thumped out his general direction. There were other units somewhere ahead, which answered. He could dimly see the dancing glow of lights far ahead, down a slope and across a shallow valley. Vik heard the dread

ed scent cry of another Howler. He cursed under his breath, chest heaving.

Then he heard a rustle and a cry of annoyance nearby. Another voice snapped a be-quiet order.

A silent patrol. Not silent enough.

He was desperate now. The drug from the dart was beginning to affect him. A low-level numbness was spreading from his armpit. He didn't think the amount in his system would be enough to stop him. But it would slow him drastically. He couldn't beat another Howler.

He only had a few moments of peak activity left.

He listened acutely to the tiny sounds of the patrol. They were passing by. How many? Maybe five men.

He moved quietly forward and spotted the last men in the single-file. They were spaced about seven meters apart along a marginal animal trail.

He knew what had to be done.

Thirty seconds later he looped a thick Roblu vine over the trailing soldier's head and savagely garroted the man. There hadn't been a gasp. Not a sound.

The body thrashed in convulsions for a few violent seconds as Vik held it face down in the undergrowth. Then it quieted and went limp.

Vik quickly stripped himself of his heavy, sweat-soaked hide armor...even the pliant boots...and smeared his body and especially his feet with the man's shit and urine which the body had expelled in its death throes.

He took the dead soldier's tunic and belt and donned them. And the shield and spear and dart gun. He carefully retained the two pouches of gold from inside his discarded armor.

He didn't want to, but he abandoned his sword.

This all took him longer than he liked. His arm was almost paralyzed. The numbness was spreading slowly down his side and upward into his neck.

The Howler was screaming, close! A squad of soldiers was racing after it, crashing through the jungle toward him.

Vik bent over and lurched toward them, moaning. He concentrated on slowing his heart, on constricting his sweat glands temporarily.

If this trick didn't work...

The Howler streaked close, past him...and then it darted back, puzzled...its acute sense of smell overwhelmed by his powerful stench. Yet there was enough of Vik's odor to make it hesitate, baffled, confused.

Vik tried to ignore the beast. He kept on toward the plunging line of soldiers.

At last the Howler instinctively decided the trail was stronger and more important. It streaked away.

Vik stumbled into a group of sprinting soldiers. He let himself howl with pain as they knocked him over. He was bloody and stinking. They barely looked at him. He was just another terrified soldier wounded by the mighty, incredible Kun-Zar! They could not let the Howler get too far ahead, as had happened with the first one. Kun-Zar had somehow managed to kill the lightning-fast little animal! The reward for capturing the man-god was enormous! The risks were worth it. They ran on.

Because the first wave had passed him by, so did the others, assuming he was as he appeared in the moving glowleaf light. The Howler was infallible. This large, staggering, groaning, shit-fouled casualty wasn't worth stopping for. Let him find a field hospital on his own. He could manage to walk. He was a shameful coward to let his bowels turn to soup and be unable to contain it!

And so Vik was ignored as the large squad passed. He turned west and managed to move steadily, drawing on his reserves, fighting the pain and blood seepage and paralysis.

After an hour he was far into the raw jungle, far from any army units. The drums were faint in the night. The lights were gone, cut off by intervening jungled hills. He heard, still, the faint, shrill, frustrated cries of Howlers as they traced and retraced his track...only to lose it at the place of his last kill.

Vik was exhausted. But he kept going.

The sky lightened to a luminous grey. The jungle changed character. The ground softened and turned to swamp.

Vik barely noticed. He used a broken limb as a crutch. He kept going.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

By sunrise Vik was the center of a buzzing cloud of insects at-

tracted by his wounds and by the encrusted foulness on his body.

He flinched and slapped and cursed as huge blood-sucking flying things attacked. Myriads of tiny green gnats clustered on his eyes and ears, in his nostrils, in the corners of his mouth and in his mouth when he was forced to breathe that way because of a clogged nose.

He had no defense. He caked himself with swamp mud and used the army tunic to cover his head... But the insects crawled inside somehow and feasted.

His wounds were maddeningly painful in spite of his auto-hypnosis. His concentration was shattered and destroyed. He cried out in torment and flailed futilely with his free hand.

He was food, and there was no mercy.

He was barefoot, and an endless night of walking -- staggering! -- had left his feet raw and bleeding from thorns, sticks, rocks and the swarming, biting, feeding insects.

He had twice barely avoided stepping too near deadly-looking purple-banded snakes.

His right-side numbness had passed, as the dart drug had worn off. In its place was pain from the swarming, festering wound. He crushed hundreds of bugs and kept his arm pressed tight to his side, but there were always a few moving in the wound. His deeply gashed calf was a seething mass of insects in spite of constantly applied mud. His left thigh wound could not be seen for bugs!

As he fought the pain and the insects, Vik realized he was near the Congo. He must have traveled west and north during the night. This endless swamp had to be fed by the mighty river.

He knew how weak he was, how near the end of his strength. His condition dictated his plans. He had to risk contact with the first bulbhut tribe he could find. He desperately needed rest and salves and food.

But the morning wore on and he slogged through unending swamp and bog. He kept moving west and north, but with each passing hour his pace slowed.

He became aware of being tracked. Followed boldly. Not by the army. He caught flickers of movement when he looked around.

In midafternoon he was dull-minded, in a fog of endless pain, endless torment. He limped severely as he moved, dragging his tor-

tured feet forward, depending more and more on his tree-limb crutch.

It was a large swamp croc. It had decided he was nearly weak enough to attack. It was waddling through the mud and water less than thirty meters behind him. In deep stretches it glided closer, in its element.

Vik dimly realized he was in the Luozu Swamp, a wasteland noted on maps but never visited, never known.

The swamp croc was different from the crocodiles and alligators known in the 20th century. It had mutated as a result of the Bio-War and the following, suicidal nuclear exchanges. The entire world had tasted the fall-out of both phases of that mutual devastation.

Most large animals hadn't changed. The swamp croc was one that had. Its reptilian genes now grew it larger, gave it longer legs, a shorter tail, a bigger brain, a more vicious set of teeth.

Vik turned and faced it. He had a short spear, a dagger, and a crutch.

They studied each other.

The croc came for him, sloshing through three decimeter deep water. It moved fast! Its powerful jaws opened.

Vik dropped to his knees in the water and ooze. He dug his feet deeper for leverage. His mind sharpened with a surge of adrenalin and fear. What he had to do was simple. But he had to do it right the first time.

He set the fork of the crutch against his shoulder and dipped most of its length into the water before him. To the croc the two meters of strong tree limb ceased to exist. It wanted to crush this human creature's head between its jaws. Then, it knew dimly, the rest of the body would be still and would be good to eat. This big human would keep its belly full for weeks.

Vik set himself and waited for the croc's charge to bring it to its death -- or his.

At the last possible instant Vik lifted the crutch from the water and lunged forward, driving the blunt, splintery end far into the croc's throat. The shock of the impact sprawled him backward. He had seen the crutch tear into pink flesh as it smashed into the beast's gullet.

The croc reared and flipped, almost slamming Vik with its wildly flexing tail. Maddened by pain, it

snapped its powerful jaws on the crutch, chewing it off with crunching molars and saw-like incisors. But at least a meter of the crutch was lodged in its throat and stomach, ripping its organs as it continued thrashing. Blood gushed from its jaws.

Vik rolled and crawled quickly away. He struggled to his feet and turned away from the huge, dying reptile. His brief adrenalin high was fading, leaving him barely able to stand.

He had to use the short spear as a staff, but it was almost useless as it sank too far into the mud and ooze. He became tormented again by the swarming, feeding insects in his wounds.

He staggered grimly on through the seemingly endless swamp.

An hour later he was semi-delirious, lurching and sprawling, muttering to himself, forcing himself erect slowly, agonizingly, to go on...

He saw something ahead. He desperately wiped clustered gnats from his eyes and squinted through the vine and moss-draped trees. A man dressed in rags... watching him.

Vik fell. When he managed to clear his vision again the figure was gone.

He couldn't stand up. His legs were quivering with exhaustion. He was spent. He slowly rolled over and over in the ooze to relieve the pain and purchase even a few seconds respite from the merciless swarms of insects.

There were things in the water and mud worse than the bugs, but he didn't care. He had no choice. He had to rest.

Vik dragged himself to a small log and threw an arm over it. He rested his head on his arm and relaxed. He clenched his eyes shut. He fought the insects that tried to enter his nostrils and mouth. He slapped more mud into his ears to keep them free of the maddening bugs, and to quiet the endless whine and buzz.

He managed a kind of sleep, somehow.

It may have been a ripple of water against his skin, a sound that penetrated the mud, a sixth sense. He opened his eyes and looked up.

He was surrounded by six white men in tattered slave outfits.

Their camp was a series of bulb-hut clusters, and surprisingly large. Early runaway slaves had found an island of high ground in the swamp and settled there.

Through the years other runaway whites had reached them. Knowledge of the sanctuary was closely guarded among the Congo slaves. Vik had heard rumors only.

He was now grateful they had found him and dragged him several kilometers to the island.

He lay naked on a small bladder bed in a bulb-hut with a tight door. The windows were filled with fat, intricate spiderwebs. The hut was insect-free.

A white guard with an army spear stood by the door. Two older whites, in decent robes, their heads shaved -- one with a broom-like top-knot -- watched him and conferred in whispers.

A mulatto woman, heavy-breasted, was naked except for a loin cloth and a triple necklace of croc teeth. Her mass of straight black hair was bound in elaborate coils atop her head. She knelt beside the bed and sponge-washed him patiently, tenderly. They hadn't bound him.

Vik was content to be washed and to rest. He could still smell himself. He closed down his mind and slept.

He woke after dark. The wind-ows were draped to prevent any light escaping. A single small glowleaf dimly illuminated the hut. A different guard stood by the door.

Vik felt better. He was clean. He had been anointed with oils and his wounds slathered with salves and sealed with Jop membranes. A young living robe covered him, its suckers fastened to his neck. The robe pulsed faintly amber.

The mulatto woman squatted at the foot of his bed, eyes closed. The two older white men were gone.

Vik was famished and very thirsty. He lifted his head and caught the guard's eye. "I'm hungry."

The young man used the spear to prod the woman awake. "Get him something to eat. And tell the priests he's conscious."

The woman left quickly. Vik spotted his two pouches of gold in a tray close beside the bed. That told him a great deal. He relaxed more.

Three minutes later the two robed men entered. They gazed at him intently. The one in the glowing

lavender robe and the gray-tinged top-knot said in accented English -- a virtually unknown language in Africa -- "Are you the immortal Kun-Zar?"

Vik considered the possibilities. They knew he was Masil and knew the extraordinary measures taken by Ndola and Quebo to find and capture him. They knew the government assertion that he was their god, Kun-Zar.

They had to find out. They had to test him. But as either Masil or Masil-Kun-Zar he was immensely valuable to them.

As Masil he could be traded for great wealth and tactical advantage.

As Kun-Zar he was their god, their legendary immortal leader whose return to them meant world domination and an end to their mass quest. It meant wealth and a reversal of roles with the blacks.

Vik smiled. He replied, in English, "I am. Please do not use English. You speak it so badly it's very hard to understand."

The man said in the common mid-African language, "Masil would know a few English words and would avoid the language. He would pretend to be Kun-Zar to avoid return to Ndola."

Vik grinned and said in English, "Listen, you stupid sonofabitch. You prime-grade asshole, you cock-sucking, shiteating, motherfucking idiot. You speak English like a mongoloid German. Bring me food and drink or I'll twist off your balls and eat them as nuts. Do you understand me?"

Both men paled. The one with the totally shaven head said, "That is English, but he speaks it so fast!"

The other obviously had, nevertheless, understood most of what Vik had said. He began to tremble. He said, in English, "Kun-Zar ruled the Franco-German Confederation from A.D. twenty-five sixty for ... how many years?"

Vik answered, "Fifty years. Then I disappeared and reappeared twenty years later as Eric The Bloody. I had blonde hair and a full beard. I ruled that time for thirty years and was lost in a storm in the North Sea. I came back again ten years later as Kurt Von Richter, with dark hair and a patch over my left eye. I led the Confederation against the new Czar of the Ukraine and we lived fat for a generation."

Both men were awe-struck. Shaven-head sank to his knees. He bowed and touched his forehead to

the scraped, bulb-hut floor. He moaned.

The other, the more senior and self-possessed, was shaken, but still skeptical. "Masil is known as a great knower of history."

"Then for Christ's sake ask me a question only Kun-Zar could answer!"

"I cannot. I don't know enough. I'm only an underling priest, escaped from slavery a year ago. I have no copy of The Book of Kun-Zar. I was only taught for five years by the high priests." He appeared anguished. "We can't tell if you're really...." He swallowed. He looked sick. "Great Kun-Zar, if you are...."

The other priest stood and appeared ashamed of his obeisance. He still trembled. He cried, "Why did you leave us? Why are you black?"

"I couldn't control things any more. You were disorganized mobs after the twelve-year freeze. It was chaos. Everyone -- each tribe, each cluster of coherent, semi-organized population headed south. The northern whites became armed bands of nomads preying on those still farming, those still in towns and cities. I saw what was coming. I knew the ice would spread south for maybe a thousand years, till the dust and excessive CO₂ in the atmosphere declined. The balance is probably correcting itself now, but the inertia of that drastic change in the weather patterns will carry the new ice age for another hundred years or so. Maybe more. Then it will take more hundreds of years for the ice to recede."

"We don't understand about that...see oh too...and why the ice came. You abandoned your people!"

"Different value system." Vik pointed to the older man. "What is your name? And his?"

The man said, "I am Dolph, First Believer of this camp. This is Onree, my Helper."

There was a soft rap on the door. The guard looked through a peephole and then admitted the mulatto woman. She bore a woven vine basket of food and a gourd of something to drink.

Vik sat up painfully, full of aches and stiffness, and greedily began eating. He refused to talk until he had stuffed himself. He drained the gourd of wine.

His fast-healing processes began again, fueled well by the meal.

Onree had remembered something. He said to Dolph, "Didn't you tell me that Kun-Zar had once taken a sword cut that would have meant

certain death to a normal man...but he stopped the blood and healed himself magically in a week."

Dolph nodded. "I remember the passages. His left arm was almost severed. The blood pumped like a geyser. An ordinary man would have bled to death in a moment, but he closed his eyes and willed the blood to stop flowing. His generals and companions were amazed. He was carried to his castle and bedded. He ate enormously, against his doctors' advice, and recovered in seven days. All that was left of the wound was a thick scar..."

Vik lifted his left arm and pushed aside the amber robe. "On the inside of the arm, halfway between shoulder and elbow. It's much fainter now, but I still have it." He displayed the thin, irregular brown scar in his black skin.

The two priests stared. Tears rolled down Dolph's face. He sank to his knees. "My God. My God!"

Onree, too, knelt and wept. The guard watched, wide-eyed, and then could not help saying, "But he's black!"

The mulatto woman watched impassively.

Dolph said, "My Kun-Zar. You must change yourself back to be a white man again. It is time."

Vik put anger and imperiousness into his voice. "I will decide that!" He pointed at the mulatto woman. "Who is she?"

Dolph said, "A slave. One of our slaves. She serves the colony under my orders."

"Why does she have a ring in her nose?"

"All of our slaves are ringed that way. The blacks are beasts, and we tie them to posts every night, to keep them in place. Even so, a few try to escape."

"Just as you tried?"

Dolph frowned. "I am a white man! We are the Chosen Race. For seven hundred years we have searched for you -- our God -- and now we've found you! We are vindicated. You left us, you tested our loyalty and belief, and we never wavered. Now you have returned to us and you will lead us to mastery of the world again!"

Vik sighed. "Leave me alone. Leave her to me. Post that guard outside the door." He settled back and ignored them all. He closed his eyes and waited as they whispered together for a moment, and finally obeyed.

A moment later when the bulbhut was silent, Vik asked her, "What's

your name?"

She answered softly, in a low, sweet voice. "Lufira, great Masil."

"You don't think I'm their god?"

"No, great Masil. Animals do not have gods. They have no souls, so they can only copy true people and pretend they are people."

"How many blacks are slaves here?"

"Nearly fifty. Each hut has its black slave. We serve everyone, in every way. I take as many as five poles a day, and night. They are sex-mad beasts. They make me put down my hair and dance for them, and then I must let them use me."

"Human nature is wonderful."

"They are not human!"

Vik didn't care to argue the point. Most conversations of this type were utterly useless. He said, "Wake me with hot food and hot drink at dawn. Leave me alone, now. I want to sleep."

Lufira bowed her head and showed her palms. She hooded the glow-leaf and curled up on a thick mat near the door.

Vik cleared his mind for deep sleep.

He was eating his third big meal by early afternoon the next day. He felt much better and he knew his wounds were healing very quickly.

Dolph hurried into the bulbhut. "My God, the army has sent patrols deep into the swamp. They are close!"

"How close? How many?"

"One kilometer an hour ago. One patrol has ten men, another, further west, has seven."

"What do you do when there's a risk of discovery?"

"Only a few blacks have ever penetrated this far. We kill them or enslave them, if possible. We've never had the army..."

"You may have to pay a high price to keep your god. Do you have trained fighters? Do you have a military organization?"

"We have very few with experience fighting in the Quest Wars in the north. Our fighting men are rarely taken as slaves. They're never brought south to the heart of the empire."

Vik nodded. "True enough. How many people in this camp?"

Dolph hesitated. "I don't know. More than...two hundred."

"Can they all leave here quickly? Is there another island of high ground we can go to?"

"There is only deeper swamp and then the Congo."

"Then you'll have to create a diversion...a decoy to draw the patrols away from here. Maybe paint your biggest man black, dress him in what I was wearing, and send him out to do the job."

"It will be as you order, my God."

"Make damned sure he understands he must not be caught. A white in black face in that army tunic would be tortured and there'd be five thousand army searching this swamp within a day."

Vik thought briefly. "Get him ready, then wait until you're positive a patrol will discover this place unless led away. Have him be sure to limp. And as an emergency measure get a crew ready to carry me away on a stretcher."

"It shall be." Dolph was radiant. "Kun-Zar is perfect. Kun-Zar knows the world and his plans will save us."

Vik rolled his eyes. In English he said, "Get your ass out of here! Get it done!"

They were lucky that day. The patrols turned away and returned to the solid jungle.

But two days later....

Vik was planning escape from the whites. His wounds were healing very quickly. He ate like a pig to provide the extra protein and vitamins needed by his body/mind. He might risk leaving in another day.

He was feeling fine in other ways. Lufira was a good woman, a gentle woman, and willing.

He was lying on the spongey bladder bed, eating berries, toying with her large breasts, smiling, laughing, as she toyed with him -- her hand in his robe -- when Dolph burst into the bulbhut.

"My God---" He stared at them. He was suddenly shaking with rage. "Our God Kun-Zar does not lower himself to sex play with animals!"

Lufira pulled away, but Vik held her close.

"What do you think I've been doing for seven hundred years? What do you want?"

"If the immortal Kun-Zar wants a woman...a real woman...there are dozens of lovely white girls in

our camp who would be honored to bed with you. I was going to ask if you wanted one -- or two -- when you were well. But now, if you wish----"

"Dolph, why did you come in here?"

"Ah! The army patrols are in the swamp again. Our scouts report them further east, but they are penetrating farther, seeking the Congo, we think."

"They'll probably work a grid and eventually search the entire swamp. Do you people have a fallback camp? Another sanctuary?"

Dolph shook his head. "Where could escaped white slaves cluster for long except here? The raw jungle is being chopped and settled every week, by refugees from the north fighting. The big farms are spreading out..."

"Do you have boats?"

"Only a few canoes. Most of our people are in rags and eat only from the bulbs. Where can we go? What will we do?"

Vik sighed. "Have everyone make a small survival pack of food and drink. Send your best scouts to the jungle west and south to find escape paths for most of your people. Their only chance is to go in two and threes and try for the Malange mountains."

"But they are...over one thousand kilometers south of here!" Dolph was shocked. "It would be suicide. Not one of us would survive. We would all be killed or captured."

"Do you want to fight the patrols? Then fight the full army reserve clustered in the jungle?"

"You are a god! You are Kun-Zar! You must save us! We are your people!" Dolph fell to his knees and touched his head to the floor.

Vik bit back the words he wanted to say. He had to heal at least another day. Until then he couldn't risk offending these savages.

He said, "Your best hope is to send out your decoy today, now, and have him lead the patrols to the Congo where he will discover an old canoe and set out across the river."

"He must sacrifice himself?"

"Probably. He'll have to either make it across and cause the army to begin massive searches on the far bank, or he'll have to dive and swim rather than be captured."

The Yanya---"

"Yes, the Yanya will eat him.

But if he looks enough like me from a distance he'll fool the patrols and the searches of the swamp will be cancelled. If he gets across the Congo he'll have to wash himself unobserved and become a white runaway slave again. He'll be on his own."

Dolph was filled with admiration. "It is ingenious."

"Yeah, it might work. Bring to me the man you've chosen. And next time you come to me, announce yourself from outside. Don't enter until I say. Understand?"

"As the mighty Kun-Zar wishes." Dolph withdrew.

Lufira asked, "Shall I leave?"

"Yes, but first bring me fresh Jop membranes and salves."

She left and returned a few minutes later. "Shall I change your dressings now?"

"No, I will do it myself at a time of my choosing. Leave now, and don't come back until after Dolph and the man he brings to me have left. Then bring me roast croc meat and lots of fresh berries."

She was disappointed and her feelings were hurt, but she obeyed.

Alone, Vik quickly peeled away the darkened, two-day old membrane and inspected his calf wound. It had closed and was crusted with a zig-zag of black scab.

He flexed the leg and tried standing. There were sharp twinges and a beginning ache, but in an emergency he could travel on it.

Still standing, he peeled off the covering of his left thigh wound. The same miraculous healing had occurred.

He felt tentatively in his armpit and smiled. He settled on the bed and applied fresh antiseptic salve and Jop membranes.

A few minutes later Dolph called from outside, "Mighty Kun-Zar, I have returned with our hero."

Vik called for them to enter. He lay on the bed in his robe.

The man with Dolph was big. Not quite Vik's size, but close enough. His skin had been darkened with mud and vine juice. His hair had been tightly curled and dyed and trimmed. He wore the filthy army tunic.

Vik studied the man...and the man studied Vik. Vik said, "Give him a tree limb as a crutch." He asked the big man, "What's your name?"

"First son of Mitrovika."

"All right, Mitrovika, position yourself ahead of the patrol and settle down into the swamp. When you're sure they'll see you, rise up and stagger away. Remember, you are supposed to be badly wounded. But don't let their fastest men get too close. You know where the canoe is hidden?"

"Yes. I know the swamp well."

"Umm. Don't go straight for the canoe. Flee to the Congo and then go left or right as if in panic...and then appear to stumble on the boat."

To Dolph, Vik said, "I hope they buy it. Is the canoe old and rotten enough to appear derelict?"

"It's the worst one we have."

"They'll examine the canoe after Mitrovika is through with it."

Mitrovika said, "It leaks badly."

"All right. Good luck, Mitrovika." Vik clasped hands with the big man.

Dolph asked, "May I return in a moment, my God?"

"Yes."

When he returned, Dolph said, "I have five maidens who wish to serve you, Kun-Zar. All untouched by men. All lovely. The finest fruit of our cluster."

"Thank you, Dolph. I'm not strong enough for maidens yet. Another week..."

"You may use them as you wish, my God. They will serve you as the half-breed animal has served you."

"I don't want a lot of young, giggling girls cluttering up the bulb. I'll keep Lufira."

"The people talk about her with you. They say if you are really Kun-Zar you would not prefer an animal to a white woman."

"Why did you put her with me in the beginning?"

"She is skilled with medicine. She knows cuts and bleeding. But now she is not needed here all the time. It would be better if you used a white woman as servant."

Vik yielded. "Very well. After Lufira has brought my evening meal, take her. Bring me your white girls tomorrow. And keep me informed about Mitrovika."

"As my God wishes." Dolph withdrew.

He returned hours later, triumphant, as Vik was eating a second large bowl of Deffi snake and gourd meat.

Dolph clasped his hands and

knelt in worship. "Great Kun-Zar, you planned perfectly. A concealed scout saw Mitrovika lead a patrol through the shore reeds of the Congo. He took the canoe out into the river. He got away!"

It was deep twilight outside. Vik said, "Let's hope he doesn't run into patrol boats."

"The scout said the river was clear, and Mitrovika was dipping his paddle with mighty strokes. The stupid black soldiers were dancing with anger."

Vik stopped chewing. They had provided the old, leaking, supposedly derelict canoe with a nice, strong paddle. And the soldiers had seen a big, supposedly exhausted and wounded black man paddling away at full strength.

The patrol commander would surely report that anomaly, and the conclusion would be reached: a ruse, a decoy. And tomorrow -- if not tonight! -- the army would be in the swamp like locusts.

Vik handed his bowl to Lufira for another helping. He was going to need it.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Vik had noted that the guard outside his bulbut had been increased to two men armed with spears and daggers. He hadn't commented on it to Dolph because he knew the answer would be: they are for your protection, great Kun-Zar.

But Dolph and the other few leaders of the white camp had to have a few lingering doubts, and at the same time some strong desire to in fact protect this huge man in case he really was Kun-Zar.

But Vik had to escape the camp tonight, and there were only two ways: by bluff or by stealth.

Stealth was the best way. The problem was the guards. Once outside in the darkness he was in his element. The solution was to cut his way out.

Vik took the knife from the large fruit bowl beside the bed. It was ironwood and lacked a decent edge, but it would have to do.

Vik rose from his bed. He unsuckered his robe, let it fall, and was naked. He was careful at first as he tested his body for freedom of movement and pain. The wounds ached slightly, but as long as he avoided violent, extreme movement he should be able to function

well. He spent ten minutes exercising, loosening himself. Then he wrapped the robe in a bundle with his two pouches of gold, and tied the bundle with the decorative braided vine robe sash.

He stabbed into the still soft wall of the huge hollowed gourd that was the hut. He was in a way lucky to be in a "young" hut recently scraped clean of its nutritious meat. Another year and the bulb walls would be dried hard as wood.

He quickly worked up a sweat as he cut the fibrous shell in a rough circle about waist high. He was careful not to let the knife penetrate all the way through.

After an hour he had a "window" ready with a very thin outer covering.

He listened intently. Minutes passed. The guard at the door exchanged low-voiced comments. But they didn't move. There was no circling of the bulbut. And he couldn't detect anyone outside the rear wall.

He had to take the chance and break out.

He moved to the hooded glowleaf which acted as a soft nightlight, and pulled its roots free of the floor where they penetrated to the rich earth under the hut. The glowleaf died.

He went to his "window" and used the knife to quietly puncture its edges. Then he inserted his fingers and gently pulled. With a muted tearing sound the outer shell opened along the perforations.

Vik listened and looked for a five heartbeat, then eased out through the gap. The entire cluster was dark, as it had to be. Every door and window was covered or sealed. No cooking fires were ever allowed at night.

His eyes adjusted to the faint moonlight filtered through a fog. He knew there were white patrols -- scouts -- moving in the surrounding swamp, and early-warning observers in trees. But he was supremely confident he could avoid them. They were attuned to intruders from outside.

Vik hated the prospect of facing those millions of vicious insects when daylight came. He blanked his mind to those thoughts. He judged the white colony's canoes would be somewhere on the north side of the island.

He was right. But there was a guard. Vik heard him masturbating

in the lower crotch of a nearby tree.

Vik smiled and crept closer to the canoes. He kept alert to the pace of the man's breathing. When the guard began panting and slapping his fist up and down, Vik eased a small punt into the shallow swamp water, flattened it in and let the canoe drift slowly away from the soggy bank. The paddle in the bottom of the canoe dug painfully into his left thigh wound.

At dawn he sat in the canoe, hidden in reeds, and watched the Congo river traffic. He was about 300 kilometers downriver from Kinshasa. The river was enormously wide. He had only seen one large patrol boat slip by close to shore.

He didn't have time to hide here and wait. He could hear very faint screaming on the south breeze. He had been right about the army coming into the swamp in force. The white's camp had been found.

Vik thought it ironic that he and Mitrovika might be the only survivors....except for the black slaves.

The army commanders would send fast patrols splashing through the swamp in all directions, seeking him. He had escaped them once again. They'd be furious and desperate. Ndola and Quebo would have a lot of them executed if they failed much longer.

Vik checked the river again for a patrol boat. Clear. He paddled free of the reeds and headed straight out into the mighty Congo. The morning wind was rising and the water became choppy. He was very careful with the small, easily tipped craft; he wasn't smeared with Yanya repellant now. One mistake and the world's one immortal man would be digested in the bellies of a thousand and vicious little fish.

An hour later the wind died away as he drifted near the middle of the river. He lay, sunning himself, in the shallow bottom of the canoe, waiting for a ship that he thought would be safe.

Even the sharpest eyes could not see the log-like canoe from the shore.

Vik was in no hurry, now. He watched a coastal freighter with ten oars on each side slip by. He gave it a wide passage.

He watched three other ships pass. None of them satisfied him. The wind picked up around noon. It was from the east and allowed the big ships to pull oars and raise sail.

He spotted a huge three-master

surgings toward him, its sails painted with the colors of the Congo Shipping Company. One of his companies.

He recognized it a moment later -- the Kasai Queen. Captained by a man he knew and trusted.

Vik grinned and carefully moved to a kneeling position. He was faced with a ticklish maneuver. The big ship was moving fast under sail and with the current. It was high in the water, sailing empty. Probably so much disruption of commerce in Kinshasa and the empire that cargoes were unavailable. All the interlocking coordination of his commercial and banking and shipping holdings was now missing.

Vik scanned the deck and superstructure but could see no evidence of army men. He decided to board. He had to be close enough to swing into the stern and reach the ladder or the trailing vine, yet not so close the bow waves or wake capsized him.

If he missed he'd face death or another long wait in the river.

As the ship loomed over him, Vik paddled expertly to take the bow waves straight on, then skimmed close to the hull, under the oar ports and the twenty long oar blades. The oars were up and in to their limit, but the projecting blades were a meter long and wide.

He was aware of sailors leaning over the railing, watching him, calling out.

The stern ladder, built into the hull, swept toward him. Vik spun the canoe and reached with his left hand for one of the deep ladder step notches. It was wet and slimy. He almost lost his grip. He grabbed his bundled robe with his other hand and transferred to the ladder.

Sailors leaned over the rail to give him a hand when he climbed higher.

The canoe bumped against the hull and fell astern, bobbing in the wake.

Vik was committed to the ship, totally. He threw the bundle upward to the deck and used both hands and feet to mount the ladder to the rail. He called, "Tell Captain Mavinga an old friend is coming aboard!"

Arms reached for him -- and a coldness passed through Vik. The arms were decorated with army tattoos.

He was naked and unarmed. The knife was in the bundle.

He realized instantly what had been done: every vessel leaving

Kinshasa carried soldiers hidden or disguised. Especially the ships controlled by Masil companies.

The soldiers probably were put ashore at the mouth of the Congo and sailed back up the Congo on incoming ships.

He had been suckered and trapped.

His anger and determination concentrated to a white hot controlled rage.

Vik allowed himself, smiling, to be hauled inboard over the rail. The fake sailors noted the Jop membranes over wounds and his feigned pain as he was handled. They did not hold him with the absolute fierceness and strength it would have required for even a few seconds control if he fought.

The ship's real sailors were watching from midship.

One of the "sailors" called, "We have him!"

A hatch slid open and uniformed army men came surging up on deck. They were armed with dart guns, spears, nets.

Vik bowed his head and started to sink to his knees. The hands holding him relaxed for a second to shift grips, to allow him to fall.

With a savage roar, Vik exploded into action. He gripped a leg with each arm and straightened, lifting -- and flipped the two men who were holding him backward over the rail.

One fell screaming into the river. The other clung with one hand to Vik's right arm, and with his other hand to the rail. Vik shook him off.

An army "sailor" dived for Vik's legs, to bring him down.

Vik leaped adroitly and landed with one foot on his neck. The spine crackled and the man went limp. A fourth fake sailor backed away.

The army men advanced, readying their darts and nets. More emerged from below.

Vik was facing at least seven armed men. He was still naked and unarmed.

His best chance was to be a moving, dodging target. He hoped his thigh and calf were healed enough.

He darted after the retreating "sailor" and caused the man to turn and run into two of the advancing soldiers.

Vik veered left around the massive rudder housing. And leaped

and clambered up into the sheltered wheelhouse. To the real sailors at the wheel he yelled, "Get down!"

They ducked and scrambled away. The wheel spun free. The ship began to turn. Poisoned darts hummed into the wheelhouse and stuck in wood and hanging vine mats.

Vik pulled one of the darts free and flipped it back. He was lucky -- a low, humiliated cry rewarded him.

A quick look and he exited over the wheelhouse rail to the port side deck. He landed like a great black panther between two soldiers. A powerful karate chop, a lethal kick, and the two were down. He knew he had to clear the ship of army men to survive. In three seconds the two were flailing in the air in their fall to the water.

Vik had a spear, two daggers, a loaded dart gun.

The ship heeled to starboard and the sails began a thunderous flapping. A mate bellowed orders.

Vik had to keep moving. He ran from behind the wheelhouse, depending on surprise, speed, and superior reaction time.

He was on the deck above the captain's cabin. He caught three soldiers on the ladder to the wheelhouse. The rungs encumbered them -- fatally. He shot one with the dart gun, skewered a second with the spear, and plunged a dagger into the belly of the third.

The dart-shot soldier was still capable. He had a few seconds before the paralyzing drug took effect. He lunged with his spear and missed. An instant later he was dying with a dagger deep in his left eyesocket.

Six soldiers dead, one incapacitated by a dart. How many were left?

A net hissed through the air over Vik's head.

He reacted instantly by leaping like a diver, arms outstretched, seeking the edge of the net. His fingertips flipped up the weighted outer lines as the net settled over his body. He slid out from under in one fluid move, turned, and hurled his remaining dagger at the thrower on the wheelhouse deck.

The man toppled, clawing at ironwood buried in his neck.

Vik whirled, sensing acute danger, and spotted a soldier aiming a dart gun from the hatch. Vik dove through the railing to the main deck four meters below as the soldier fired.

It was a fluke -- the dart struck

the underside of the railing and angled down to stick in Vik's ankle.

Vik somersaulted in the air and landed on his feet -- and became aware of the stinging wound. The dart fell away, but the drug was in his flesh.

He had only a minute before he was slowed enough to make fighting or running impossible. How many soldiers were left? One at the hatch -- had ducked out of sight. Where was the officer?

Vik ran to the three dying men at the wheelhouse ladder and snatched up a spear and a dagger.

He paused, scanning the stern decks. The sailors were at the wheel, regaining control of the ship. There were bodies -- writhing, groaning, screaming in death throes -- but none standing. No effective soldiers visible.

The hatch. At least two remaining army men were below deck. He had to find them and kill them very quickly. He had no time for caution.

Vik knew the layout and design of this ship well. He had okayed the plans five years before. He had inspected during construction.

Vik leaped down into the companionway hatch and plunged into the semi-darkness of the long 'tween decks passageway. His eyes adjusted to the gloom with superhuman speed.

He spotted a soldier crouching in a narrow cross passage a few meters away. The man had been on deck in the sun. He was still partially blind.

Vik had no mercy in him. He hurled the short spear with great force and accuracy. The soldier was slammed backward by the impact. The ironwood point cracked his breastbone and spread bone splinters into his lungs.

Where was the officer? Vik screamed with rage and frustration to keep his adrenalin pumping. He had a dagger. That would be enough. His eyes drifted to the glass-paned door to the captain's cabin. The covering drapes swayed with the ship's movement. That's where an officer would retreat to.

Vik smashed the door open and confronted the officer across four meters of carpet and table. The officer had been waiting. He barely flinched as Vik erupted into the large room. He triggered his dart gun.

Vik twisted aside too late. The dart caught his arm. He completed his instinctive move and wrist-snapped the dagger on its way

The officer staggered and reached for the ironwood handle that protruded from his belly.

Vik watched the man struggle to pull out the dagger. Vik was very tired now, and becoming numb. If there were more army men....

The officer toppled.

Vik staggered to the captain's bunk. He was dizzy. He plucked the dart from his arm as an afterthought. He sat fighting the drug for a long minute. He was losing.

He heard footsteps. Running men coming down the 'tween decks passage. His hands had lost all feeling. He couldn't move.

A man who wore a captain's golden necklace entered the cabin with two sailors.

As Vik toppled sideways on the bed, paralyzed, he knew the man before him was not Captain Mavinga.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Vik awakened with a terrible headache. He didn't open his eyes. He was bound hand and foot with vines and ropes. He looked about then. He was lying on the floor of the captain's cabin. The captain and a mate were watching him. Another sailor stood guard, armed with a dart gun.

There were lingering tinglings and areas of numbness from the paralytic drug that tipped the darts.

The bindings on his hands and feet were tight and well-knotted, sailor-style. He couldn't get free.

The ship was moving...being rowed.

The captain said, "Thank you for killing all the soldiers."

"Why am I bound?"

"You're a very difficult man to keep in one place." He grinned. "We've decided to sell you to Ndola."

"I'll pay you triple."

"We already have your gold. It wasn't very much."

"I command more gold than Ndola. More than you can imagine."

The captain shrugged. "That may be. But how could we collect it? Who would pay it? We are sure of Ndola's gold."

Vik subtly tested his bonds again. No. Someone would have to cut him free. He asked, "Who are you? What happened to Captain Mavinga?"

"He's in Kinshasa. All Masil-owned ships have new, Ndola-loyal captains and mates."

"You're not loyal."

The man smiled. "That's right. We're asking twice the announced reward for your capture. Our messenger should be in Kinshasa tomorrow at dawn. We'll be back in Kinshasa by late afternoon tomorrow."

"Ndola will trick you. You'll all be slaughtered."

"No, we've considered the ways he might cheat us, or kill us. We have a good plan."

"Listen, I have a large cache of gold in Trivandrum, on the tip of India. You can have it all. Sixty-thousand emperors."

"Maybe you do...Kun-Zar. Or Masil. But we've made our decisions. Besides, I suspect a man who is supposed to have lived as long as you...you're probably more devious and untrustworthy than our dying emperor. You'd have to be, to have survived this long."

Vik studied the man, studied the mate, the guard, and decided there was no use in more talk about changing their minds. They were right.

He said, "I need something to drink and eat."

"You'll have to wait until after we trade you. I'm sure Ndola will feed you."

Vik yelled, "You're a fool! I'm the god of the whites! The slaves all know who I am now! They will mark you and this ship."

The captain shook his head. "You haven't heard what's been going on in the city. Most of the white animals are captured and penned. Especially the males. They won't save you, or manage a revenge upon us." He beckoned to the mate and they left the cabin.

Vik closed his eyes and tried to rest as best he could.

The next day armed sailors stood by as three other sailors rolled Vik into a net and tied its ends. They grunted as they carried him up to the wheelhouse deck. They strung him up in a standing position, on display, as the ship eased into position in the middle of the Congo, opposite the titanic palace trees of Kinshasa.

Vik could see huge crowds on the docks, on both sides of the river.

The captain and crew of the ship were armed with the weapons of the soldiers who had fought Vik. The soldiers' bodies had all been thrown

boarded. The Yanya feasted. Thousands of them had silvered the river around the ship all during the trip upriver. They still surrounded the ship.

There was an exchange of semaphore messages with the shore.

The mate came to stand by Vik. He bragged, "Our terms have been accepted by the emperor. He has seen you netted and bound. He has a...a telescope...it's called. He must come to us in a small boat, with the gold."

Vik grunted. "And after he has me a fleet of boats loaded with soldiers will board you and take back the gold -- with your lives."

"We're not stupid! Watch! There -- a boat loaded with armor and shields and weapons, fire bombs and heavy crossbows is coming to us first. We'll handle any force of small boats thrown at us!"

Vik shook his head. "You're fools. This ship can be sailed by forty men, but not defended. Not in this river against a disciplined force of boarders, and not at night."

The mate laughed. "We'll be downriver by nightfall, rowing and sailing like hell! They'll never catch us."

Vik didn't argue any more. The man was unreachable, intoxicated with the gold coming his way.

He watched the boatload of weapons and supplies being paddled to the ship. He watched as it was unloaded. There were no tricks. The sailors capered with glee as they mounted the big, heavy crossbows on the forecastle deck, on the midship cabins, and at the stern. They winched the bows and loaded them with heavy ironwood quarrels capable of sinking a canoe or small boat, especially at short range.

The firebombs -- oil and pitch-filled gourds with wicks -- were tested and found potent. The sailors put on body armor, tested spears and shields.

The captain mounted to the wheelhouse deck beside Vik. "Now you'll meet your emperor again, Masil." He waved for the waiting small boat to approach the ship.

Vik played his last card: "Why not keep the gold, keep Ndola as hostage till you're in ocean, and let me free to help you defend this ship against Quebo's attack?"

The captain hesitated. Then: "No. We've been assured we'll be free to sail. Besides, I understand Ndola's paying us with gold taken from your banks!" He chuckled. "Besides, why would he send us these arms if he intends to attack?"

"Your crossings will be useless at night. They'll firebomb this ship with catapults in boats and come aboard and slaughter you while you're fighting the fires. If you lower a boat and try to flee they'll give you to the Yanya. Believe me, they'll get the gold back and kill you all. You don't dictate terms to Ndola or Quebo and get away with it."

They watched the royal launch approach. Ndola sat in silken pillows shrunken and spindly, in the stern cockpit. Two men rowed. There was no one else.

Vik said again, "Take him and the gold. Free me and I might be able to save us."

"How?"

"I'm expert with the big crossbows. I can throw a firebomb farther and more accurately than any man in your crew. I can fight and kill ten men in a few minutes. You know that. Give me armor, the dead officer's sword, and I'll see this ship to the ocean."

"Oh, yes, and then? You'll take your gold and kill as many of us as you have to, and you'll be gone."

"I give you my word."

"No, we'll take our chances with Ndola's word." The captain walked away to be at the ladder when Ndola was helped aboard.

As the launch moved closer, Vik saw Ndola looking up at him, fiercely, triumphantly. The skull-gaze burned into Vik's eyes. Ndola smiled.

At the stern ladder Ndola declined to board the ship. He sent up the gold and demanded that Masil be lowered into his launch.

When Vik, still painfully bound, tied in the net, lay in the bottom of the cockpit, Ndola grinned and cackled, "Oh, mighty Kun-Zar, where are your tricks now? I see only a big, naked, bloodied man. I see a man who will tell me what I want to know in order to stay alive."

Vik ignored him. He had been periodically straining at his wrist bonds. There was a little slack now, from stretching the vines and rope, but not enough. Not yet.

The two men who had rowed the launch and received Vik from the ship were obviously tough, highly trained soldiers from Ndola's palace guards. They sat at the oars now, facing the cockpit, slowly rowing the launch back to the royal dock. Their swords were within inches of their hands. They watched him closely.

"No words for me, Masil? You will have! You'll sing your words of truth and beauty. You'll croon to me your secrets. Oh, yes. You will. You will!"

Ndola was high on Zizu and hemp, recently smoked. Even so his fingers twitched at his heavy, jeweled robe, then occasionally clenched as a spasm of agony wracked his frail body.

Quebo was waiting at the dock. He gloated, too, as Vik was hauled from the launch and lay helpless on the rough killed-wood planks. He asked Ndola, "Will the attack on the ship begin now? They've pulled anchor and are breaking out a lot of sail."

Vik looked. The Kasai Queen was moving with the late afternoon breeze. The captain was piling on a dangerous amount of sail; the ship would be very difficult to keep in the channel.

Ndola was busy sucking on a pipe of pain-killing drugs. He abstractedly waved permission.

Quebo shouted to a semaphore man atop a high platform. Signals were sent. A fleet of small boats loaded with army put out into the river a mile downstream.

Vik lost interest in the ship. The captain, the mate and his men were doomed. There were too many boats.

Ndola put aside the pipe. His reddened eyes blazed. "I want him in chains! I want him dragged behind my lions! I want the people to see him naked and bloody like this! I want them to know I conquered the mighty god Kun-Zar! I want him dragged past the slave pens! I want them to see him in my power!"

Quebo agreed. He gave orders to the officer of a nearby squad of palace soldiers.

The net was cut away from Vik. Ancient precious chains were taken from vine baskets. Manacles were closed on his wrists and ankles while he was still rope and vine bound. Finally the rope and vine knots were cut and he was hauled to his feet.

Vik staggered and damped the pain from blood-starved hands and feet. His stride was restricted by the leg chains. They made a mistake in chaining his wrists. The manacles were linked by a one meter length of heavy chain. It hung almost to his feet. He could kill with it.

But the guards were laying out another length of chain to attach to his wrist chain and link him to a huge reddish imperial lion.

Vik called, "Quebo! Do you

want to know how I escaped from the prison?"

The Defense Minister strode over, smiling. "I know. We finally discovered that manhole to the sewer." He stepped close, sneering as Vik stamped his feet to restore circulation. "This time you won't---"

Vik shifted weight suddenly and swung his arms with lightning speed. The dangling chain whipped and caught Quebo across the face. His nose was mashed and his skull cracked. He fell. Before six men could smother him down, Vik had lashed Quebo three times with the heavy links. His skull was shattered.

Ndola was purple with fury. He screamed and shrieked, "Lash him! Lash him!"

A sergeant flailed a vicious thorn vine whip ten times across Vik's naked, contorting body.

Ndola screamed, "Hold him!" He came within six meters of Vik and shrieked, "I have your precious Punia, mighty Kun-Zar! She was taken, and all of your agents and friends tasted spears in that clumsy escape from your farm! I have the bitch! And she'll die screaming, hating your name!"

Vik barely heard him. His body was a mass of cuts. He was dizzy from dozens of blows, and withdrawn from the world as he desperately concentrated on shutting down pain, surface arteries and veins.

He lay on the rough dock as they chained him to the lion. Abruptly he was dragged as the beast was led away in Ndola's triumphant procession to the palace trees.

Vik managed to get to his feet. He hobbled behind the lion, head up, observing the jeering crowds. He couldn't avoid all the rotten food, rocks, sticks, and shit that was thrown at him.

A dozen sword-bearing, armored elite guards followed close behind.

Ndola rode in an elaborate chariot drawn by four lions.

It took an hour to get to the palace trees. Vik was exhausted, mentally and physically.

He was put into the same cell as before, in the prison. He was still chained.

Vik sat in the filthy straw and watched uncaring as a guard shot him with a dart gun. The familiar paralysis spread swiftly. He couldn't fight it.

When they were positive he was unable to move, the guards took off

the precious chains and withdrew. The door slid heavily down and the bolts were inserted.

When the paralysis wore off enough, Vik crawled to the bucket of water and stale loaf of bread left for him. He ate and drank as much as he could, aware he was being watched continuously from the peephole in the door.

He slept. His body's fast-healing process began.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

It was a full day before there were significant sounds beyond the door.

Then Ndola's tired, faint voice came. "Kun-Zar?"

Vik didn't bother denying that identity. He spoke to the door. "I want free. How can that be arranged?"

"I can't hear you clearly. Come to the peephole."

Vik rose and looked out through the small hole in the thick wood.

Ndola sat wearily in the corridor on a cushioned wooden stool. He was even more shockingly skeletal than before. His blue and gold silk toga hung in revealing folds on his bony arms and legs. The glow leaf light made the liver spots on his skin appear as diseased splatters of black. Veins seemed to crawl in his skull-like temples.

Ndola's gaze was feverishly keen with a desperate lust for life.

Vik saw no guards, could hear no guards.

Ndola lifted a sticklike arm, pointing. "You are Kun-Zar?"

"Yes."

Ndola cackled, "Yes, yes, yes! You are immortal?"

"Yes."

"HOW?" The effort and desperation in the question shook the frail body.

Vik didn't know. But he said, "Free me and I'll tell you. It may not work because of your age and disease, but...But it might. Free me and I'll give you the secret. I'll leave the empire. I'll never return. There's room on this planet now for two immortal men."

Ndola licked his lips. He showed teeth in a grimace. He changed the subject. "What was in the ground beneath your tree? Forty-

six men were killed. Steam is still coming from the hole. There is a lot of melted metal down there."

"I won't tell you."

"The metal is worth a fortune. It's mine if I let you go free!"

"Agreed."

Ndola suddenly shuddered and sat very still for a moment. Finally he asked, "Will this pain go?"

"Yes, the cancer will die. But you'll stay your present age -- forever."

Ndola's eyes glittered.

Vik said truthfully, as a precaution, "A long time ago I learned to be absolute master of my body. I can withdraw into my mind and will my body to die, if I have to. I can deaden myself to any pain for any length of time. I can stop all hearing, all sight, all smell, all touch...all sense contact with the outside world. I am beyond torturing. I can't be forced to give what you want."

Ndola nodded reluctantly. "I know you were 'paralysed' before, when Singida tested you. The guards watched from the peephole. Yet when the explosion came..."

Ndola seemed to wilt as pain filled his body. He sobbed and bent further over, as if to topple to the floor. Yet he waved away an attendant who appeared. After a moment he raised himself slowly, his breathing loud and ragged. He whispered to Vik, "Even with massive doses of Zizu..." But he straightened further and lifted his chin. "Life is very precious."

Vik said, "There is no advantage for you in killing me."

Ndola shrugged. "There are certain matters to be balanced." He changed the subject again. "How did you make yourself into a black man? Kun-Zar is supposed to be white."

"In Egypt. There used to be drugs that could affect a certain gland which governed skin colour. And there were a few surgeons in the guild who could change a face -- this way. It took five operations."

"What is the secret of your immortality?"

"Free me."

"Is it a drug?"

Vik hesitated. "Yes."

"You lie! It would be known. The Egyptians would have known of it. The old science... They would have known during the Bio-War. They knew everything!"

"Ndola, I lived through the

Bio-War. The formula for the drug was given to me long before that war."

"But their science! They would have discovered it! They knew everything!"

"No. Not everything. There were many small corners of knowledge--"

"How did you become immortal?"

"It was an accident," Vik lied. "There was an immortal man before me. He was fatally wounded in a freak train accident. I was a passenger on a less damaged car. I got to him first. He knew he was dying with only a few moments to live, and he told me the formula."

"You believed him?"

"No, I thought he was raving. But I remembered the formula. And just for fun, because it seemed harmless, I tried it out. I mixed a batch and ate it once a year. After ten years I saw I hadn't aged. After twenty years I was sure!"

Ndola was clearly skeptical. "And what are the ingredients? Are the same things available now, in this empire, as were in ancient times in America?"

"Yes, the elements are in common--"

"What are you telling me, great Kun-Zar? That you wander through the jungle picking this and that, pulling a root here, a flower there? Do you take me for that great a fool?"

Vik said nothing for a few seconds. He sighed. "What do you have to lose? Do you want to die?"

Ndola rubbed his bony hand over his eyes. "No. But I'm a realist. When my men discovered your secret passages below your tree, they sent a man back to the palace trees with the word. He saw a fantastic machine with lights and incredible controls...an Ancient's machine... pure gleaming metal... But then my men must have disturbed the machine. You had it set to explode if the wrong people came close to it."

Ndola met Vik's eye. "I ask myself why was it so precious that it could not be allowed to survive in our hands? What secret did it hold? And I answer: It held the secret of your immortality. And now, without that machine you are again mortal. You will die in a few years. Unless...."

"You're wrong!"

"Unless there is another machine like it somewhere in the world. The great Kun-Zar would have secreted somewhere a duplicate for emergency use, Hmmm?"

Vik shook his head. "NO!"

"But this second machine would be far away. It would take a healthy man months, perhaps a year to reach. So I must die."

Vik said desperately, "It's a formula. The stuff tastes ugly and you must drink it every hour for ten hours--"

"But you just said it had seemed harmless to you when you first tried it." Ndola shook his head. "Your lies do not knit well."

Vik put defeat in his voice. "The machine is in India. We could reach it in a month."

"You could. On the way I would probably die. Or your agents would attack... You could..."

Ndola bent over, grunting with sudden agony. He whispered, "It's bad. Worse than...before..." He nearly toppled from the stool.

Vik felt all hope slipping away. Ndola's virulent cancer was eating his life, too.

Ndola looked up. His sneer was distorted, but clear. "Kun-Zar. Mighty immortal Kun-Zar. Masil! You've been laughing at me for years...twenty years...playing games with me. Pretending. And now I have you! No. I'll die. But in my dying I'll not be made a fool! And I'll have one great satisfaction. I'll be remembered for one great deed." He grinned a death grin and gestured weakly. "Guards!"

They came and helped him leave.

Vik turned and bleakly regarded his cell. What did Ndola have planned? Some kind of public execution? A public auction of Kun-Zar's parts?

As Vik waited he stared into his mind at his long life. The incredible adventures, triumphs, failures...all were a waste...because he had been complacent, stupid and careless this time. Beyond any recovery. A blind, smug, arrogant idiot!

It was becoming dark in the cell when Vik heard guards approach and begin doing something to the door. A muffled scraping...

He left the bed for a close look. They were caulking the cracks and seams. Sealing the cell.

He yelled angrily, "Why are you doing this?"

There was no answer.

The peephole was plugged with cork.

There were sounds outside the tiny window. It was blocked. The cell was plunged into total darkness.

Vik knew then the aliens would let him die. He had long ago decided his immortality was an experiment. Perhaps all mankind was an experiment. Now his part, after a little more than a thousand years, was ending.

Vik heard hissing in the darkness...and caught the first whiff of an acid gas.

He went mad with rage. "YOU COWARDLY SONS OF DISEASED DOGS! LION FUCKERS! YOU CAN TELL NDOLA... HE..."

Vik choked as unseen clouds of the gas were pumped into the cell. He became dizzy. He lurched and staggered around the cell. He began slowing his respiration and heartbeat, desperately trying to avoid...

He was abruptly on his back on the cold stone floor. His mind slewed and skidded. He managed to think, What a shitty way to die. Then consciousness warped away and he sank into a black whirlpool.

But did not die, did not fully submerge.

Vik's awareness of self returned. His mind swam up from nothingness, captured by a creaking sound ... He was lying on his back in lush softness...

Bright light penetrated his closed eyelids.

Vik opened his eyes slightly. A great slab of sparkling, transparent crystal hung over him, swaying, held in the air by plaited ironvine ropes in a heavy-duty pulley system.

To his right -- an on-edge slab of the same clear crystal, only a foot from his shoulder...and another slab to his left. Cushioned white velvet under him.

He was lying naked in a tomb of the crystalline plastic from the ice-lands of North America!

As his eyes adjusted to the sunlight and the rainbow glitter from the crystal, Vik saw twenty of the emperor's palace guards spaced on the marble dais around the huge, transparent coffin, facing inward. Their plumed spears were levelled.

The top slab of crystal hung only half a meter above the top of the coffin. Another, identical tomb stood a dozen feet away, empty.

A voice said, "He's awake, Great One."

Ndola's weak voice came to Vik. "Good! Be ready at my signal."

Vik considered a quick scramble from the coffin...but his first move would bring those deadly lances -- impossible.

Ndola was carried on a cushioned litter close to the giant sarcophagus. Near him, held by guards, was Empress Punia, her lovely face a mask of controlled horror.

Ndola wore a golden leaf robe that was only flickeringly alive, with his massive, intricately-worked jewelled necklace of Empire. Beside him lay the gold and diamond encrusted staff, while on his sunken-cheeked skull the Empire Crown glittered with hundreds of diamonds, rubies, sapphires, set in gold, silver and platinum.

Ndola stopped his litter five meters from the coffin, just inside the cordon of alert palace guards. He chuckled painfully. "I've had a gold plaque cast in your honour. It reads, 'Mighty Kun-Zar, the Once Immortal Man, Defeated and Entombed by the Great Ndola'. It will be set in stone -- here -- and I shall be at your side."

Vik turned his head to look fully at Ndola, and spotted the amethyst-necklaced commander of the guards. The commander had taken a lot of money from Masil in exchange for information and secret loyalty.

Vik sat up and put every element of deep, vibrant, baritone power and authority he possessed into his words. He spoke directly to the guards and their commander.

"I am Kun-Zar the Immortal. I will reward you all with high command, wealth, and my favour for as long as you live. Disobey me now and my curse will curdle your wives' wombs and you will father monsters! Your poles will wither and you will live in shame and sickness the rest of your lives!"

His rich, strong voice overrode Ndola's attempt to interrupt. Without pause, without hesitation, Vik commanded, pointing at Ndola, "SEIZE HIM!" And confidently, calmly, unhurriedly, began to climb from the coffin.

There was an instant of hesitation in the men. A flickering of eyes to see if anyone would obey. The commander was poised -- eyes narrowed, body tense, about to act --

Ndola screamed, "DODOMA!"

And a full company of the elite army soldiers rustled into the temple from their secret positions just outside. Every archway was suddenly filled.

The tension broke and the palace guards prodded Vik back down, inside the rectangular crystal tomb. He closed his eyes in despair. There was almost nothing left, and a terrible dread was claiming him. He opened his eyes and looked around at the guards, at

Ndola, at the temple...

He noticed an observer in a second-level alcove, a white face peering down. The bearded face of Singida's slave with the small Kun-Zar Quest religious design tattooed on the cheek.

Ndola had committed a terrible blunder. He had publicly confirmed Kun-Zar's existence in Kinshasa. Word would reach the white barbarian hordes in the north and they would sweep invincibly south to join their god, to make him their king again. They did not believe he could be killed, and maybe they were right.

Vik begged. "I ask of you, Great Ndola, one last request."

"What do you want?"

He turned up his palms in supplication, and spoke an old ritual: "Give me a full belly for my journey into death. Give me meat and let me eat my fill."

Ndola studied him. A long moment passed. A slow, malicious smile spread the Emperor's lips. "I can't deny you."

He pointed to Empress Punia. "Here is your lover. Eat her! Take your fill of her, because if you don't she'll die later today for betraying me in your bed." He gestured to the two nearest guards. "Give her to him."

Punia gasped and shrank away. Her face was pale, her eyes enormous. She screamed as the guards took her and dragged her to the huge coffin. She disintegrated into hysterical, squalling terror.

Ndola ordered, "Take her bracelets and crown!"

They obeyed, then lifted her and thrust her into the massive tomb.

The emotionally shattered girl fell on Vik and blindly clutched at him, sobbing, pressing to him instinctively for warmth and protection. Her pink leafgown had been torn. It flickered softly, one of its suckers hanging loose from her large, exertion-swollen left nipple.

The hanging slab of crystal, its square edges sharp and perfect, swayed ponderously above them in a slow, eccentric arc, disturbed by the guards and by Punia's flailing body.

Ndola coughed. "I knew. I knew everything." He lifted one thin arm in a brief ritual salute. "You have your meat, Kun-Zar. To a white beast, does it matter that it is alive?"

Vik braced himself. He closed off part of his personality, part of his character. He had to sur-

vive! This was his only chance now. He had to go ahead. His mouth was bone dry.

Mortals did matter to him. He had come to think of them as his property, his pets, his children, his responsibility. He had been guiding and rebuilding civilization as best he could since the horror of the Bio-War had swept over the world. In another five hundred years or so the few viable monsters inhabiting the icy wastes of what had been the United States and Canada would have bred true and would be spreading south...eventually they would cross the oceans.

He had to be alive when that challenge came to mankind!

And now --

He held Punia and slipped his right hand under her slim neck. He kissed her trembling lips. "I'm sorry." He poured strength into his big hand and made a powerful vice of his thumb and fingers. Her carotid arteries were squeezed shut.

Punia's brain, suddenly deprived of a flow of fresh oxygen and nutrient-rich blood, began to die. Her consciousness winked out. Her body began to convulse.

Vik kept up the pressure until her heart stopped for lack of a proper signal from the dying autonomic system in the lower brain. Other controls stuttered and died. The body voided its wastes with great jerking spasms.

Vik flipped the body to his left side on to its back and tore the leafgown away. He used hooked fingers to rip open its stomach and tear away the muscles. Blood spattered him and welled up in the gaping ragged hole as he plunged his hand into the cavity and found the warm, barely-still heart. He ripped it free and forced himself to eat it in huge rending bites. He barely chewed.

Vik was into a kind of trance, a fierce autohypnotic action sequence that forbade "human" thought. He heard but did not hear the gasps from the hardened guards. Even Ndola's shocked, reflexive laughter did not penetrate.

Vik found the liver, clawed it free and wolfed it down. Then both kidneys -- biting, swallowing as fast as he could, drawing ragged breaths, snorting against the bloody goblets he crammed against his working mouth.

He ate only the heart, liver and kidneys. Then he heaved the ruined body out of the crystal coffin.

May back on the blood-soaked white velvet. He saw Ndola, face contorted, gesture for the lowering of the massive overhead transparent slab.

The guardmen closed in to prevent a last-instant attempt at escape. The ironvine cables moved, the pulleys creaked....

Vik closed his eyes and began to slow his metabolism. He had fuel now, rich in the highest quality proteins, fats, vitamins. The interior of the tomb was large enough to provide air for years if he could slow himself enough, and he hoped the lid slab would not be an absolute airtight fit. He hoped the emperor that followed the doomed Ndola would open the coffin. Or that vandals would try to breach the seal...or that he could last until the white barbarians heard of Kum-Zar's entombment and came to set him free.

One end of the top slab grated into position. The final ropes were pulled free and the mighty crystal slab thudded down. The sound echoed in the temple.

Vik concentrated on the ancient techniques of body control. His heartbeat quietened and slowed. Forty beats per minute...twenty...ten...five... His oxygen requirement sank to the absolute minimum.

He settled into a deep, murky dream.

Earth's one immortal man waited.

END BOOK

ALIEN THOUGHTS CONT. FROM P.44

contact irritant or calmed down or something.

'Fourth, if the nurse-midwife had noted that the fetal heart rate showed signs of acute increase or decrease, or if there were indications of dystocia not previously anticipated, that sleepy OB/GYN man in the next room would've been in there faster than you can say "Marcus Welby", ready to perform a caesarian section, to try a podalic version, to cope with an abruptio placenta, things a nurse-midwife isn't trained to handle. If Mr. Eastman can pull that sort of expertise out of a Merck manual, I wish the hell he'd tell me what edition he's reading: mine sure as shit doesn't have it.

'Fifth, quite a few hospitals are or were stuck on the old "keep-the-little-darling-away-from-mother-cry" routine. The most reliable method we have of keeping E. coli

dysenteric out of the nursery -- and that otherwise innocent little bug is still a killer when it afflicts immune-incompetent neonates -- is to keep enteropathic E. coli away from the kids and out of the nursery. That's why the nursing staff wears surgical scrubs, why doctors don gowns to enter the nursery area, why hand-scrubbing routines are religiously followed. Since the discovery of neonatal acquisition of passively trans-immunity via maternal antibodies contained in breast milk, however, a re-thinking of the old attitude has come about. In older and more hidebound hospitals (and many of them, I've found, are Catholic-run), the Sisters stick to the isolationist line, declaring that the joys of nursing do not compare to the agonies of a nursery full of mortally-imperilled babies.

'Sixth, of course physicians blanch at the thought of laymen -- particularly a layman of Mr. Eastman's calibre -- thumbing through the PDR. That collection of bound package inserts is so inadequate it's pitiful. The damned thing is divided, not alphabetically or by type of drug, but by the pharmaceutical companies manufacturing. The goddamned book is put out, every year, by the drug companies, and the data presented is full of understatement or overstatements designed by men who are more lawyer than pharmacologist, a "cover-your-ass" in the grand old medical tradition, designed to keep the companies safe in that great big litigation-filled pit we call American society. And -- let me ask you -- if the PDR is so goddamned great, why the hell does every practicing doctor have about half-a-dozen books on pharmacology in and around his office? I've got Goodman and Gilman, THE QUICK DRUG REFERENCE, the Lange REVIEW OF MEDICAL PHARMACOLOGY, and umpteen books on surgery, emergency and internal medicine, obstetrics and pediatrics with profound discourses on the pharmacotherapy of disease. And I don't own one goddamned PDR!

'Will Mr. Eastman please take note of the fact that I'm a D.O., an osteopathic physician, and use it as a means of staying the hell and gone away from me or any other osteopath; I'm certain that my colleagues want him for a patient even less than I do.'

((I suppose you have critiqued a *classie case of a little-known-geese-a-dangerous-thing-it-is*..))

10-12-78 Time to wrap it all up and send it away to the printer. Thanks to all who wrote letters and hoped they'd appear. I have five here and no room. Write again! Merry Xmas!

"So then I said to Alter, I said, 'Alter, you can go to hell!' He was so amazed at my decision to stand up to him that he--"

Geis! GEIS! Get your ass down here in the basement! We've got reviewing to do!

'Uhh, sorry, friend, I've got work to do now. Got to do some reviewing Alter is too lazy to do himself. Honestly, without me, he'd never get SFR out on time.'

GEIS! Get off the fucking phone and get your fucking ass down here before I boot it to the fucking moon!

'He depends on me so much. Got to run, now. Bye.'

GEIS!

Pant, pant 'Here I am, Alter. And I must say you have a foul mouth today.'

Think so? I'm influenced by a novel by Phil Dick, titled CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST, \$3.95, published by Entwhistle Books (Bx 611, Glen Ellen, CA 95442).

'His characters curse like you?' No, they-- Why are we indenting six spaces? Four is our format. You know that! Why do you screw up the IBM settings, Geis?

'Ummm...Elsie was typing up the stencils for--'

I don't want excuses! I want you to obey me and serve me the way every man in the book serves and obeys the bitch wife in CONFESSIONS. Now there's a psychopath after my own heart.

'Yes, but she drove her husband to suicide and attempted murder of her, and she ruined the life of a young lover, and derided her retard brother, and--'

Nobody's perfect. And you've got to admit Phil painted a devastating picture of a certain middle-class California life-style and weirdo influence. He told it the way it is between Victims and Masters. If you follow Transactional Analysis theory you can see scripts all over the place.

'I tend to think that Phil Dick has had experience with Bitch women. Maybe even for a while he unconsciously picked them. Whatever, he has here painted her down to the last detail, every psychological twist. And he has provided the reader with dozens of insights and understandings of the human mind. It's a sometimes grotesque story--but it all rings true.'

You'd tell people to read it, wouldn't you?

'Yes. And the multiple POV is interesting and works beautifully. It--'

Shut up, Geis.

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